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AMAZING STORIES

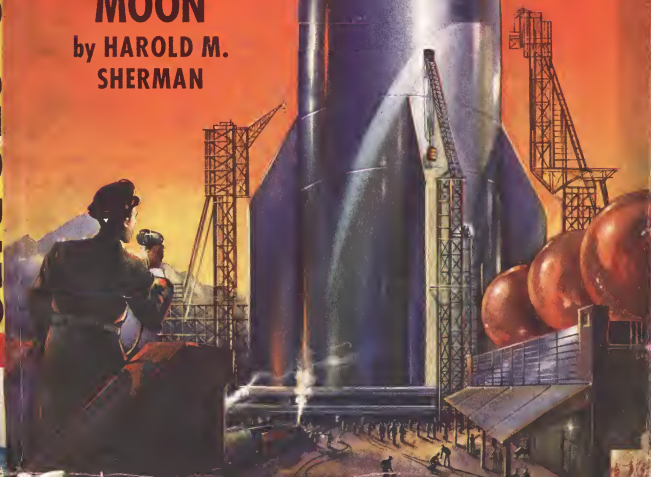
APRIL
1947

AMAZING STORIES

APRIL 25¢

ALL ABOARD FOR THE MOON

by HAROLD M.
SHERMAN



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All Stories Complete

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ALL ABOARD FOR THE MOON (Novel—55,000).....By Harold M. Sherman..... 10

Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa

Gil Benson was a playboy; devil-with-the-women; and rich—and it
all added up to rocket ships! Yes, he wanted to go to the Moon!

MIRACLE MAN (Novelet—16,800).....By John & Dorothy de Courcy.. 46

Illustrated by Julian S. Krupa

They called him "Miracle Man" because of his surgical marvels on
war-torn Pacific islands. But they didn't know about the Voice.

I, JOHN COTTER (Short—6,000).....By Millen Cooke..... 74

Illustrated by Arnold Kohn

John Cotter looked into a microscope as a child, and from then on
the world of the small was the only world he was interested in . . .

Front cover painting by Julian S. Krupa illustrating
a scene from "All Aboard For The Moon."

.....

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The

OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

MANY of you will no doubt remember the novel "The Green Man" by Harold M. Sherman in our October 1946 issue. Well, Sherman's back again with another novel, based on something very much in the news right this minute—rocket travel to the moon. "All Aboard For the Moon" is a down-to-earth (and moon) story with hard, cold facts in it. Yet it reads like the most amazing of science fiction ever imagined, with thrills galore, and the same fine writing that made "The Green Man" so popular. We think you'll enjoy the story, and find it more than worthwhile. Incidentally, Mr. Sherman is working on a sequel novel to "The Green Man" which we predict will be a humdinger—besides being of especial significance to real thinking people of today.

JOHN & DOROTHY de COURCY (who have just announced the birth of a son) return again to our pages with "Miracle Man," which we think is a very fine story. It's an unusual thing, and no matter how you take its theme, you'll be forced to admit that it stirs something basic inside you, deep down where "rightness" counts.



"All the way down!"

"I, JOHN COTTER," completes the issue and it's by Millen Cooke. She has an interesting yarn here, and it has a slightly mystic touch, besides being reminiscent of "The Diamond Lens," which is a classic of its type.

SO MUCH for the stories in this issue. The articles and features are guaranteed to satisfy you readers who tell us the features are the first thing they read. It really is amazing how our features, fact and otherwise, have taken hold. We find them immensely valuable and they'll never leave our pages as long as their present quality continues—and with such writers as Gaddis, Moore, et al, that'll be never.

SCATTERED through this issue you'll find hints that we're planning a big special issue devoted to summing up and presenting proof available to date on the Shaver Mystery, plus an explanation of what it's all about, so that you readers who have not been able to get back issues can get up to date. These back issues, which many of you order from us, are just not available. Your only hope to get many of them is the second hand magazine dealer. And we understand they are asking premium prices. Shaver stories are getting \$1 and \$2 per copy in many places, and copies are rare. Thus, if you are really interested, watch these pages for the announcement of the particular issue with the answers in it! Mr. Shaver has done a long article completely explaining his position in the Mystery, presenting what proof he has, and explaining many things, such as how to use his alphabet, just what a dero is, where he can be found, how he operates, why you can't be shown a "cave" or presented some "mech" on a gold platter.

AMONG the things presented in this special issue will be a story, presented in slightly different fashion so that it will be new and entertaining to readers who have read "I Remember Lemuria!" (which many demand we reprint) which will recreate the effect given by that first story, and at the same time present the Mystery

(Continued on page 8)

ADVICE TO READERS:

who are suffering the miseries of

BAD SKIN

Stop Worrying Now About Pimples and Blackheads

and other externally caused skin troubles

JUST FOLLOW SKIN DOCTOR'S
SIMPLE DIRECTIONS



SQUEEZING pimples or blackheads to get rid of them is a nasty, messy business—but that isn't the worst of it. Because doing so may also be injurious and leave your skin with unsightly, embarrassing blemishes. There is, now, a much easier, safer, cleaner way to help you rid your face of ugly, offensive, externally caused skin troubles. You merely follow a doctor's simple directions.

Good-Looking Skin Is Not for Women Only

You—yes, you—can have the same healthy, normal complexion free from externally caused skin troubles simply by giving your skin the special care that handsome screen stars give theirs. There's almost nothing to it—it is just about as easy as washing your face. The whole secret consists of washing your face in a way that thoroughly cleanses the pores of every last speck of dirt and grime—something that ordinary cleansing may not do. In fact, examination after examination shows that, usually, it is not a case of "bad skin" so much as a case of incomplete or faulty cleansing. What you should use is a highly concentrated soap like Viderm Skin Cleanser which penetrates the pores and acts as an antiseptic. When followed by a quick application of Viderm Medicated Skin Cream, specks of irritating dirt and grime are quickly washed out; they dissolve and disappear, leaving your skin clean, clear and free of the specks that often bring out pimples, blackheads and other externally-caused skin troubles.

It's Foolish to Take Bad Skin for Granted

It doesn't pay to risk marred skin, blotches, blemishes. Your very success in business, love and social life may depend upon your looks. *Handsome and a good appearance usually start with the condition of your skin.* Nobody likes a skin that looks unhealthy, unclear, abused, and marked with blackheads or pimples. **WOMEN ARE ATTRACTED TO MEN WHO HAVE SMOOTH,**

CLEAR, ROBUST-LOOKING SKIN. Business executives don't choose men who have a poor-looking complexion. Don't take chances with your success in life when this inexpensive Viderm formula may help you.

Don't murder your skin! Here's all you have to do to keep it smooth and clear. Use Viderm Skin Cleanser when you wash your face. Rub the rich lather of this highly-concentrated soap on your face for just a few seconds and then rinse it off. Then apply a little Viderm Medicated Skin Cream and that's all there is to it. Viderm Medicated Skin Cream quickly disappears, leaving your skin nice and smooth. This simple treatment, used after shaving, helps heal tiny nicks and cuts, relieves razor-burn and smarting, besides conditioning your skin.

Give Your Face This Treat for 7 Days

Stop worrying and being embarrassed over what may happen to your skin. Just send for your Viderm Double Treatment this minute, and be confident that you will keep a smooth and clear complexion. Follow the simple directions, written by a doctor, that you will get with your Viderm Double Treatment; then look in your mirror and listen to your friends admire your smooth, clear skin—the kind that women go for.

Just mail your name and address to The New York Skin Laboratory, 206 Division Street, Dept. 464, New York City 2, New York. By return mail you will receive both

of the Viderm formulas, complete with full directions, and packed in a safety-sealed carton. On delivery, pay two dollars plus postage. If you wish, you can save the postage fee by mailing the two dollars with your letter. Then, if you aren't thrilled with results, your money will be cheerfully refunded. Remember that both of the formulas you use have been fully tested and proven, and are reliable for you. If they don't help you, your treatments cost you nothing. After you have received your Viderm, if you have any questions to ask concerning abused skin, just send them in.

DON'T DO THIS!



Don't murder your skin by squeezing it. Skin is delicate. When you break it, you leave yourself wide open to miseries. It's far easier, far safer, to let the Double Viderm treatment help you enjoy a handsome, clear and blemish-free complexion.

The OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

(Continued from page 6)

as it was first presented, with all the essential information that so startled the science fiction world. It will be called "Formula From the Underworld."

THE cover, already painted for this special issue by Robert Gibson Jones, presents a scene in the caves which is made as accurate as is possible to make it. Says Shaver, "That's how it looks!" The cover is not intended to illustrate any story, although it does illustrate "Formula From the Underworld" (or any other cave story for that matter), but is intended to create the initial impression in the mind of the reader that this is reality, and not just an "impression" by an artist.

MANY hundreds of readers have visited Mr. Shaver, and none have gone away willing to say "that man is a liar." Many skeptics have visited your editor in his office and asked "do you really believe this stuff printed in AMAZING STORIES" and have gone away convinced that we do.

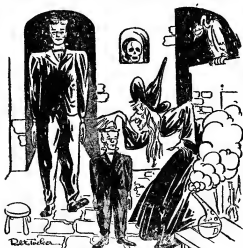
AND there's where the biggest rub comes in with most of the readers who demand proof. They ask, "WHY do you believe it?" Do you really want to know why? Or do you just want to know the degree of our "hallucinations"? We refuse to answer people who ask the question with that impression in mind. To them we say, "we have hallucinations—or at least, that's what you, not having hallucinations, would call them." It is

an hallucination that we have ourselves seen the same weird "space ships" or "rocket ships" or "vapor trails" or "bolides" or "northern lights" or "imaginings" in the sky that hundreds of readers report sincerely. If you were to read the many letters from soldiers and sailors, stationed in remote parts of the world, doing guard duty at night, who have seen things in the sky that our modern scientist will scoff at, and prove to him are only meteors, or northern lights, you'd feel differently about it. These things are NOT meteors or northern lights. Just recently a piece of "rocket lining" fell in Oregon on a campus, in full view, accompanied by a shower of ice in a fifteen-foot radius. The "scientists" who analyzed it said it was "similar" to "rocket lining" material. The Army and Navy (or at least the newspapers said so) did not launch that particular rocket from which the lining came. The papers hinted maybe the Russians did. If the Russians did, we ought to step up rocket research, because we are certainly playing second fiddle! That's dangerous business. Does it take a fiction magazine like AMAZING STORIES to stress the importance of not taking these "mysteries" lightly? What if the Shaver Mystery is VITALLY important to our national security, to our very lives, if only on the basis that we are misinterpreting it, and it isn't dero, or caves, but the Patagonians (or the Siamese—if you care to place Russia last in scientific achievement today)?

SHAVER says the cave people always talk about "coming up and conquering" us. What if they did exist, and decided to come up, and decided the best way to strike a "pearl harbor" blow was to strike first "through" a proxy, start a war between surface nations, by giving one or more nations some terrific weapons? Then they could come up with the job half-done for them by ourselves! Oh yes, it's all poppycock. Just imagination. Or is it? You readers who can read (which entails understanding what you read) the papers, can't fail to see that all is not as it should be in the world. There are too many things that we ought to have explained, rather than dismissed as just something "unexplainable." When rocket lining falls in America, and we didn't shoot it, we ought to find out for sure who did shoot it, rather than just shrugging our shoulders and forgetting it, just because it's another of those "silly" Fortean occurrences.

SHAVER has presented a fantastic view of the "mysteries that happen every day" but at least he's no ostrich in the sand, and no "dogmatist." He might just be fool enough to stumble on the truth. He's like the radar operator who said "enemy planes approaching in force" at Pearl Harbor and was told to "quit drinking that stuff."

SO YOU don't believe Shaver. You think it's all a hoax. You're going to quit reading the mag-



"And whose little boy are you?"

azine if we don't quit insulting your intelligence. Okay, throw your "radar" in the river. Maybe we are all wet. You take the chance that we are not. You are so "insulted" that you fail to see that the stories themselves are VERY FINE. Why don't you "disbelieve" them, but read them for entertainment value? They HAVE that value. Your editor is a fan of 25 years standing. HE thinks they are darn good stories. HE enjoys them. And when he read the first one, he didn't believe it either! But he didn't write the author, who said it was true (the nerve of him!) and call him down for "insulting" his intelligence. No, we said: "we think this will make a hit with the readers, and we'll do our best to put it across with the same conviction you show—but do you mind if we call it "racial memory" which seems more logical to us, rather than this stuff about "I saw it myself in the caves"?"

WE HAD to admit later Shaver was right, and we were wrong. It wasn't racial memory. It was something else. What else? It was a mystery to us, but not to Shaver. He said it was "thought records" which was a mystery to us. What was a thought record? So, we call the whole thing a mystery. It's still a mystery.

INCIDENTALLY, as you read this, men are lowering themselves into a cave in Texas. They are taking cameras along. The cave may prove something, or it may not. It is a tremendous cave. It has much "shaver-mystery" about it. Queer things happen in it. BUT, the truth of the matter is, SOME of our readers are SINCERE enough about AMAZING STORIES' great "hoax" to risk their lives to prove it isn't a hoax, because THEY know it isn't a hoax. As Shaver says, it seems that "either you know about it, or you don't, and proving it to those who don't is like proving that Standard Oil cheats on their income tax." Of course they don't, but can you prove it? Either you hear voices, see projections from the caves, or you don't. Prove it to those who don't. Actually produce some of the "mech." Just as easy as actually producing some of the "gold" buried at Fort Knox. It's there, but can you prove it?

YES, there's proof. Incontrovertible proof, but no good for those who refuse to accept it. Drop ice and rocket linings out of a clear sky in your back yard, from no visible or provable source, and you'll "explain" it away, no matter how. And then proceed to forget about it. You shrug and say, "I don't know..." Okay, you don't know. But we're trying to tell you. And that big issue IS going to tell you. What it'll PROVE is up to you. We, the editors, think what we have will prove to be terrific, a challenge to the world. That's OUR opinion. In this issue, for instance, is an article about "Maxwell's Demon" which describes a "mech" that could be from the caves. We insist that on the surface to-

day are many pieces of cavern "mech" and the only reason we can't use them as PROOF is because their origin is LIED ABOUT, because WHO'D BELIEVE THE TRUTH?

AND now, to have a little fun with the remaining few lines of this editorial, let's make a few predictions (for which AMAZING STORIES can lay top claim to accuracy in this century!). First, let's predict that within a few years, we will be visited from outer space, by a ship that will be seen all over the earth as it circles the planet, but such a ship as no one could have imagined even in our pages up to now. It will be a ship as much as two hundred miles long! It will be piloted by... well, let's just call them Titans. At least their engineering ability will be titanic!

NEXT, let's predict that in the next twenty years there will NOT be a major war on this planet. But let's also predict that there WILL be another major war, which will put an end to all this silly business. That one's easy, because we are now inventing the weapons (or getting them from the caves! heh, heh!) which will make the war they are used in quite some gory fracas. Some of us are bound to get killed. Along with that prediction, naturally, we predict that all the Peace Conferences will fail, as will any real disarmament program. You can't disarm a nation today by throwing away its guns. Guns are out-moded. We always throw away the arms we don't intend to use any more, but it fools no one. The arms of the next war are too secret to throw away. Nobody's supposed to know we have them—so when we agree to disarm, we don't talk about them, do we? But we read about 'em in the papers, and they are all explained away the next day, by an "authority."

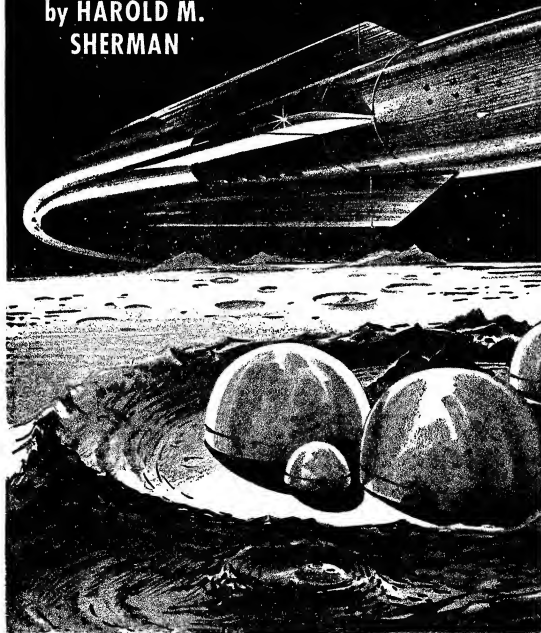
Rap



"They were sent here from their world by a scientist or something named Sinatra."

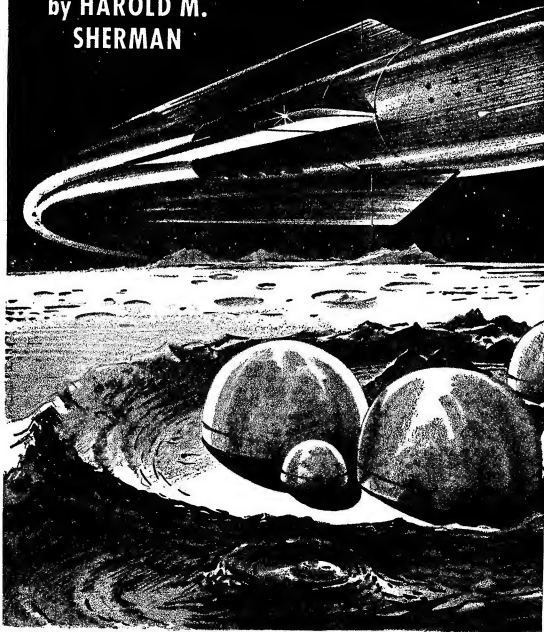
ALL ABOARD FOR THE MOON

by HAROLD M.
SHERMAN

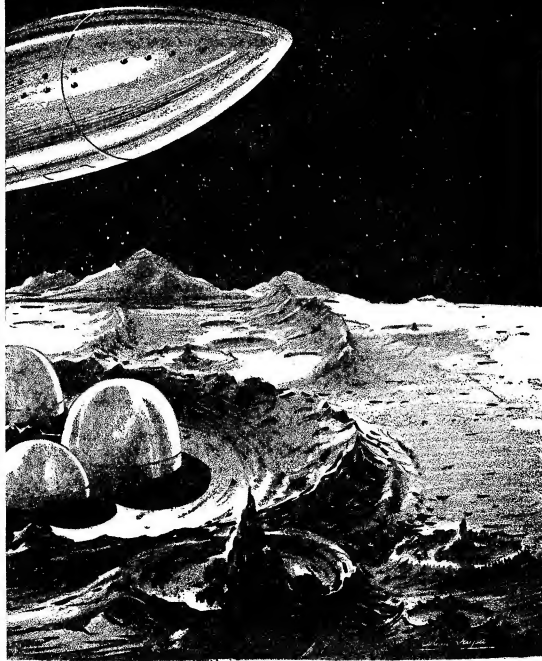


ALL ABOARD FOR THE MOON

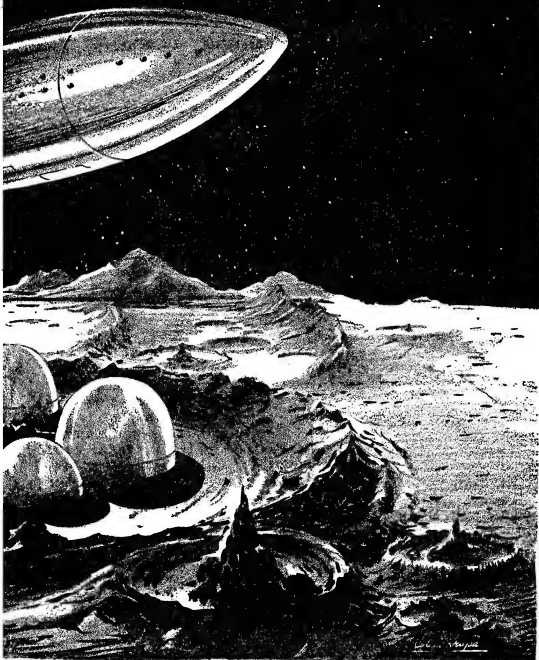
by HAROLD M.
SHERMAN



Today the V-2...tomorrow the Moon
Rocket! Even as you read, Man may
be making the first try at space travel!



**Today the V-2...tomorrow the Moon
Rocket! Even as you read, Man may
be making the first try at space travel!**



WILBUR WILLIAMS, Hollywood press agent, had a problem. She was a gorgeous red-head who wanted to break into pictures.

"Can you act, Honey?" he asked her.

Diana rolled her blue, blue eyes and Wilbur almost rolled on the floor at her feet.

"Of course I can act," she said. "I've had two seasons in stock!"

"You're *beautiful*!" said Wilbur, with conviction. "I think you're a swell kid. I'd like to do something for you, honest I would. But tell me, Baby—who referred you to me?"

Diana's eyes rolled some more.

"Why everybody says you're the best publicity man in pictures," she said. "And so I naturally came to *you*!"

"It sounds like a line but I like it," said Wilbur. "Stand off there so I can take a gander at you!"

Diana obliged with a professional pose, lifting her dress above the knees, as required by every casting office. (Well, almost every one!)

"Hm! Not bad. MacDonald body, Grable legs. Your eyes seem to be original."

Wilbur stood up to get a better view. He was short, pudgy and near-sighted.

"How long have you been in Hollywood?"

"A week."

"Where did you play in stock?"

"Milwaukee."

"Leads?"

"I walked on in 'Room Service' and I walked off in 'The Man Who Came To Dinner,' and I understudied the nurse in—I forget—oh yes, 'I remember Mama' . . ."

"I see—quite a variety. But you're *beautiful*, Baby—there's no denying that. Have you got a date for dinner tonight?"

The blue eyes did another roll.

"Not yet."

"Well, you've got a date now. I want to give you more time. See what I can cook up. What you need is to go to dramatic school—learn screen technique—let me give you a publicity build-up. But all this takes dough. Here's a sordid question—have you got any money?"

Diana's eyes stopped rolling.

"No," she said.

Wilbur chewed for a moment on his cigar.

"Well, that makes things more complicated. Why do you girls always come to Hollywood on good looks and no money?"

Diana shook her head.

"How do you think I can afford to give you my services? I'm a busy man. I handle publicity for some of the biggest stars in the country. The streets are filled with good-looking dames who've got loads more experience. I'm sorry, Miss—what's your last name . . . ?"

"Fenimore."

"Fenimore? Hmm! Diana Fenimore! Yeah! It slips off the tongue! It'll look good in lights, too! . . . Turn around, Babe—let's see your profile!"

Diana revealed an impish nose and a cute, determined chin.

"All right—the dinner date stands. Meet me back here at my office at six. I can't promise anything, Baby—but I'm sure as hell gonna try. You've got something. At least, it gets *me* . . . and I've been in this racket a long while!"

Diana's blue eyes clouded up with appreciation. She reached in the bosom of her dress, unpinned a cloth purse and took out a roll of bills.

"I was lying to you," she said. "I just wanted to see if you thought enough of my chances to do something for me on your own."

Wilbur choked on his cigar as she placed five hundred in bills on the desk before him.

"I've been around," she said, "and I know what it takes to crash Hollywood. One good publicity stunt will do it."

"Miss Fenimore," said Wilbur, his voice laced with respect, "you have just knocked me for a goal. You are not only beautiful but there is something inside that head of yours which is decidedly not sawdust! Do you mind telling me how you came by this bankroll?"

Diana's blue eyes made the complete circuit.

"I earned it," she said, "with a flying circus—making *parachute jumps*!"

Wilbur Williams, Hollywood's greatest press agent, did a backward flip-flop in his swivel chair.

THERE was another man in Hollywood who had a problem. He was playboy Gilbert Benson, head of the Benson Aircraft Company, famous round-the-world flier, speed plane builder, financier, socialite, sports enthusiast, night-club frequenter, ladies' man, and everything else he chose to be when the spirit moved.

Gil's problem was not money or girls or health or anything material. It was *boredom*. He was simply and completely bored stiff with everything on earth.

"There must be other planets more interesting than this one," he had taken to remarking to all and sundry.

But no one seemed interested in Gil's speculations, least of all the feminine lovelies who sat with him under the moon and stars. They were interested in just one thing—*romance*. Each had her matrimonial hook baited to catch America's Number One Bachelor.

Some of Hollywood's most beauteous

stars had given up in outraged despair after one night of astronomic indifference to their charms. But Gil didn't seem to mind. He would date another hopeful the following evening and bob up at a different night club or private party, providing new gossip for columnists and candid camera shots for photographers who kept reporting him "that-a-way" about "this-and-that-a-one" until they realized that the fantastically popular Gil Benson was nonchalantly "playing the field."

"Something's happened to America's Leading Lady-Killer," a Hollywood columnist lamented. "He's not the same irresponsible, devil-may-care, life-of-the-party Benson and the glamour gals don't like it. We saw him at a cocktail binge the other night, surrounded by enough beauties to turn the head of any responsive male but Gil actually yawned in their faces and went home early. His few intimates say they think he must be working on a new invention—perhaps a new jet propulsion plane—which would partially account for his weird public conduct. If this is the case, girls, you'll have to face it. Gil is being true to his 'first love' and there just isn't anything you can do about it!"

The man who had elicited this comment, read it in bed in his suite at the Beverly Hills hotel. The paper had been served to him with his breakfast, juicy morsels of gossip to be consumed with his prune juice.

Gil swore softly. Then he swore loudly. Finally, he threw the paper across the room.

"Damn-it-to-hell! Do I have to have a playboy reputation all my life? All right—so I've got money! So I like to have a good time! So I can get any girl I want! So I'm news wherever I go—whatever I do! You'd think I never had a serious idea in my head!

That I've never done a thing worthwhile! Nobody's fooling me. How many friends would I have if I was dead broke? How many girls? And, since I'm in the dough, how can I ever be sure that a girl really loves me? If anybody else wants to be Gil Benson, I'll sell out for ten cents on the dollar! I'd give everything I own to get off this earth. If my space rocket works, I'll do it, too!"

He picked up the phone and jiggled the connection.

"Hello, Operator. Get me my ranch in Arizona."

AS HE waited for the call, he examined himself in the mirror. Dark eyes, dark hair, white scar on his forehead from that plane crash, athletic build, handsome guy. At least everybody said he was. Nature had given him a good body and he'd certainly used it.

"Hello," Gil said into the phone. "This is Gil. Connect me with the plant and put Jerry on." He reached for a cigarette. "Hello, Jerry. How are things coming? . . . Is the rocket set up on the launching site yet? . . . Great! . . . Have you tested the motors? . . . You'd better be sure! If I'm going to the moon in that damn thing, I want a chance to get back . . . You don't think I'm crazy do you? . . . You *do*? . . ." Gil laughed. "Well, I don't exactly blame you! . . . Tell the boys I'll be flying in this week-end . . . be seeing you. . . !"

He hung up, talking to himself.

"Jerry's the best damn engineer in the country. If that rocket doesn't reach the moon, it won't be his fault."

The cigarette needed lighting. He fumbled for safety matches in his pajama pocket.

"When I'm ready to take off, I'll give these small-minded columnists some-

thing to write about! Playboy, eh? . . . I'll hand 'em a new title—'*Space Traveler*'—see how they like that!"

The phone started ringing. Gil took down the receiver, laid it on the bed and spoke into the mouthpiece.

"Hello! Wait till I light this cigarette!" He struck a match, inhaled, and the tip glowed. "All right. Thanks for waiting. Who is it?"

"It's me, dear," said a woman's voice.

"Be more specific."

"Why, Gil, darling. Do you have a hang-over?"

"Yes, I'm hanging over the bed to answer this phone. Is this Doris?"

"Dearest, you're *wonderful*!"

"I thought I recognized you."

"You didn't—it's *Ruth*!"

"I knew it all the time."

"Liar!"

"What else could I say? What do you mean, calling me before noon?"

Gil liked Ruth Delano. She was M.G.M.'s new pin-up sensation. Vivacious, curvaceous brunette, high strung, demanding, but fun. Could have practically any swain in town—the country, for that matter—but seemed to prefer him. At least she was giving him the rush act.

"Haven't seen you for a week—but I notice you've been out with six other girls. When are you going to get off the 'I-Might-Marry-Go-Round' and let Hollywood settle down?"

Gil laughed. "Have you heard that old adage—'there's safety in numbers'?"

"There's also *confusion*, darling. Did you ever try to pick one necktie in a hundred? No wonder you don't know your own mind. Now, if you'd just concentrate on *me*!"

"Let's leave personalities out of this!"

"Gil—did you read Jimmy's column this morning?"

"Yes—dam-it-to-hell!"

"Why, darling!"

"I'd like to go out with a girl once and not be interviewed or photographed!"

"But maybe the girl *wouldn't* like it—especially if she's a star. You know it's great publicity to be seen with you."

"Do you feel the need of some more publicity?"

"Why, Gil—are you dating me?"

"No—I'm threatening you. At least you're frank about it. Where would you like to dine?"

"Ciro's?"

"No."

"Earl Carrol's?"

"No."

"Romanoff's?"

"I'll settle for Sardi's. A booth for two, a glass of wine—and *you!*"

"Poetic! How touching!"

Gil laughed. "Be beautiful. Anything in low neck. Hair done the way I like it."

"How is that?"

"Don't get technical. But leave off that perfume. I've got an allergy."

"Gil, darling—you sound like your old self!"

"That does it! I'll pick you up at seven and break your neck."

"I'd love it!"

She hung up on him. Gil grinned and slammed down the receiver. The phone instantly rang again.

"Damn-it-to-hell!" He took up the receiver. "Hello! I'm not in! Goodbye!"

CHAPTER II

SARDI'S, on Hollywood Boulevard near Vine, is quiet, respectable, secluded. Not so breast-beating a recommendation for the goggle-eyed Hollywood visitor, perhaps—who mistakes noise, indigestible dinner music and people standing in line for tables as the

only authentic atmosphere.

But to Sardi's, on this night, came two men with problems. They occupied booths with their respective dinner partners across the restaurant floor from one another. And neither, for the time being, knew that the other was present.

"You're beautiful, Baby," Wilbur couldn't help saying again to Diana. "Don't hide your face with that menu. I want to see those eyes."

"I'm hungry," said Diana, "and I need my eyes to pick out my dinner."

"Well, hurry up and use them so I can plunge myself into their blue depths," said Wilbur.

Diana let out a gurgle of laughter.

"You are a very funny person, Mr. Williams—but I like you a lot

Hollywood's greatest publicity agent was pleased with himself. He seldom went overboard for a dame. He'd seen too many of them come and go—with the emphasis on *gone*. But the red-head was fresh and new and different. And, with all else—a parachute jumper! Ye gods!

"I think I'll have shrimp cocktail, clam chowder and lobster a la Newburgh," said Diana, letting him have her blue eyes.

Wilbur gulped. "You certainly are strong for seafood!"

"I used to go with a sailor," she said. "Every once and a while I still carry the torch."

"That's very touching," said Wilbur. "I pay for your dinner and you sit there eating, with another man on your mind."

In the private booth across the way, America's Number One Bachelor was not having too private a time. Diners had sighted him coming in with M.G. M.'s ravishing raven-haired pin-up girl and they had gathered about with the usual autograph requests.

"What do you people do with these

autographs after you collect 'em?" Gil asked.

"We trade 'em or sell 'em," said a freckle-faced Bobby-Soxer, frankly.

"Nice business," said Gil, "when you can get it. What's my autograph worth on the open market?"

"That depends," said the Bobby-Soxer.

"Depends on what?"

"What you do next. If you should marry Miss Delano—the price of your autograph naturally goes up!"

"Gil, dear—what an inducement!" said Ruth.

"This is a frame-up," charged Gil. Then, turning to the Bobby-Soxer as all within hearing laughed, he said: "How valuable would my autograph become if I should *make a rocket trip to the moon?*"

"**N**OW you're making fun of me!" accused Miss Freckle-Face. "I don't think that's nice!"

"No, honest," Gil insisted. "I really am planning a trip to the moon!"

Everybody howled.

"Gil, darling—stop ribbing the poor girl," scolded Ruth. "You'll lose an autograph fan."

Gil looked at her. "You think I'm kidding, too?"

"Of course, silly! And you'd better be careful. Some of these people are apt to talk this around and first thing you know, it'll get in the papers—'Gil Benson Renounces Earth—Going to Live on Moon!'"

Gil gave a helpless shrug of the shoulders and handed out his last autograph to a little old maid school teacher who told him she hailed from South Dakota.

"Hang onto that signature," he advised. "It ought to bring you a thousand bucks when *I land on the moon!*"

The veteran school "mom" shook her head.

"You can't land on the moon and you couldn't live if you did," she said. "Any schoolboy knows there's no air up there!"

"All right, madam, have it your own way—but when you get back to South Dakota, you tell the Board of Education that Gil Benson says they'd better get ready to change their school books. I'm going to the moon—air or no air!"

The little old maid school teacher backed warily away.

"I know where you're going," she said, "and it's *not* the moon!"

It was about this time that Press Agent Wilbur Williams, looking across at the departing autograph fans, saw who the celebrities were who were occupying the booth.

"Diana, cast your blue orbs over there—if you want to see Hollywood's leading pin-up—and America's most notorious playboy. That's Ruth Delano and Gil Benson—and Benson's a *client* of mine!"

"A *client!*" said Diana. "Oh, Mr. Williams, that's thrilling! I know all about Gil Benson. He's my hero. What an aviator! What he's done for aviation! That flight around the world in three days . . . his plane factory . . . the new designs he's invented . . . and the way he's risked his life to test new models . . .!"

Wilbur's lower jaw dropped, revealing one hundred ninety-five dollars worth of bridgework.

"Say, I ought to hire you to write his life story!"

Diana's blue eyes were focused on Benson to the exclusion of all else.

"Oh, this is worth my coming to Hollywood just to see him in person! I've read everything I could about him . . . listen to him on the radio . . . seen him in the newsreels . . . and you say—he's your client! Oh, Mr. Williams—do you suppose you could intro-

duce me . . . ?”

“Listen, Baby—not so fast—and stop staring! That’s never done in Hollywood—not *much*! . . . Be different! We’ve got to think this thing through. Gil Benson’s a very eccentric guy. You rub him the wrong way and it’s all off!”

Diana took Wilbur by the arm.

“Don’t you dare let him get out of here without my meeting him! It’s fate! That’s what it is. Did you know he was coming here tonight?”

Wilbur held his head.

“No, of course not. He usually picks a night-club. He must be extra serious over Ruth Delano. See—they’re holding hands—this is a bad night to break in on Gil, even if he is my client . . . !”

“What have you been doing for him?” asked Diana.

“Me? You’ll probably think he needs a publicity man like I need a haircut.” Wilbur rubbed his expanding bald spot. “But Benson’s peeved because the press keeps dubbing him a playboy and doesn’t give him proper credit for his scientific achievements . . . so, he’s hired me to do public relations articles for the slick magazines on his airplane factory, his research work in aerodynamics, his test piloting, his theories on stratosphere flying and that stuff. Pretty technical, if you’d ask me—but it pleases him and he pays big—so I should kick!”

Diana’s blue eyes came back reluctantly to the little man at her table.

“Mr. Williams,” she said. “If I were you, I’d feel greatly honored to be connected in any way with Mr. Benson. I think he’s one of the greatest men in America . . . and it’s just a shame that nobody really understands him!”

“A FEW minutes ago, you were raving about a sailor,” reminded Wilbur. “Ordering a meal in memory of him. Now your clam chowder’s get-

ting cold—and you’re all heated up over another guy. I suppose, if Gil Benson was Clark Gable or Tyrone Power or Van Johnson, you’d *really* blow your top!”

“I wouldn’t give them a tumble,” said Diana. “But aviation’s my meat—and he’s my idol. Mr. Williams—if you don’t take me over and introduce me—I’m going over and introduce myself!”

Wilbur pushed her back in the booth.

“If you lose your head, I’ll lose mine, too. You let me handle this. If we work it right, you may get one of the greatest publicity breaks of your life. Just to be seen and photographed in Gil Benson’s company has started many an unknown on her career!”

“Oh, I don’t care about that, where Gil Benson’s concerned!”

“Well, I do, young lady! I’ve taken you under my wing and Benson’s one of my best bets to give you the right send-off. You sit tight, make your eyes behave, and I’ll go over and give him a build-up!”

He started out of the booth.

“Remember,” said Diana. “I’m your client, too! And I’ve already paid you . . . !”

Wilbur groaned.

“You’re forcing my hand on this. I hope I can put it over—but if Gil Benson kicks me the hell out of Sardi’s—meet me outside on the sidewalk!”

Gil Benson spotted his press agent edging between the tables toward him.

“Here comes ‘Genius, Incorporated’,” he announced to Ruth.

“Yes,” said his dinner companion. “I know ‘Wee Willy Wilbur’, He’s been hounding me to let him do my publicity.”

“You could have a worse wolf on your trail,” said Gil. “He’s doing a job for me.”

“For you?” said Ruth. “What could

he do for you?"

"Write the kind of stories about me that I like to read," said Gil.

Ruth laughed. "You take your press comments too seriously, dear. Now me—I don't worry no matter what they say—just so I get mentioned!"

Hollywood's greatest publicity agent was now within earshot. He had that "you've-got-to-be-glad-to-see-me" and "you-can't-turn-me-down" look which all successful press agents must wear.

"Hi, Gil!" he hailed, from far enough away so that gawkers and potential clients at other tables might see on what close and familiar terms his friendship for America's Number One Playboy existed.

It was now time to throw a bouquet of recognition in the direction of Gil's dinner partner.

"Hi, Miss Delano! You look radiant tonight. Really chic! But I suppose Mr. Benson's already told you that!"

"He *hasn't*, as a matter of fact," said Ruth.

"Well, he probably hasn't gotten around to it yet," said Wilbur. "The evening's still young."

With these preliminaries out of the way, Wilbur launched a direct frontal attack.

"Say, Gil, I'm going to ask you a terrific favor. You see that red-head I've been sitting with?" He pointed across the floor and saw Diana giving them her big blue eyes.

Gil looked and was startled as she smiled and nodded. "Who is she?" he asked. "Does she know me? Have I met her?"

"No, but she's dying to meet you," said Wilbur. "In fact, she'll be dead any moment, if you don't. She knows more about you than the Encyclopedia Britannica. She worships the air you fly in. Not bad to look at, is she? But she's got more than looks. Would you

believe it, Gil, that little girl has made over two hundred *parachute jumps*!"

GIL BENSON had been listening with an expression of annoyance but Wilbur had played his opening cards well. He produced the ace at the right time.

"That girl a *parachute jumper*?" said Gil. "What is this—one of your *press gags*?"

"No, Gil, on the level. She's traveled with Buzz Reynolds' Flying Circus."

"Then I've seen her make some of her jumps," said Gil. "She's all right. Bring her over. What are you waiting for?"

Wilbur hadn't played out his hand.

"Well, just this, Gil. Miss Fenimore's trying to break into movies. I realize this is asking a good deal but you know how much it means to have a picture taken with you. Would you mind?"

He gave a sidewise glance of apprehension at Ruth Delano who, as he surmised, was coming to a slow boil.

"You wouldn't mind, would you, Miss Delano? It'll only take a minute."

M.G.M.'s new pin-up girl was toying, agitatedly, with her fork. "*Mind!* Of course I don't mind!" she steamed. "It's all up to Mr. Benson!"

Gil gazed at Ruth in amusement, then turned back to Wilbur. "I'm sure Miss Delano won't object to giving a poor girl a break," he said. "She was in the same boat once herself. Call your red-head over!"

Hollywood's greatest press agent could hardly conceal a look of triumph. "Thanks, Gil, old boy," he said. "I'll get you a special news release for this on anything you want. You, too, Miss Delano, even though I don't handle you."

"Be careful how you use words!" snapped Ruth. "I wouldn't let you handle me if you were the last press agent on earth!"

"You'd love me if I were doing this for you," said Wilbur. "And some day, you'll love me yet!"

He hurried back across the floor in the direction of his booth, with the eyes of many curious diners upon him.

Diana's blue eyes now confronted him.

"Well?" they asked.

"It's all fixed," said Wilbur. "Gil's interested. He's seen you jump. Baby, if this works out, you'll be off to the races—and I don't mean Agua Caliente! Come on, Gil Benson's waiting!"

He helped a trembling Diana to her feet.

"Gosh!" said Diana, "I feel more nervous right now than I do before a jump. I wonder what's the matter?"

"It's stage fright," said Wilbur. "That *proves* you're an actress! Take my arm, Gorgeous! We're going places!"

He waltzed her between the tables.

GIL BENSON, watching, said to Ruth: "I get a kick out of that guy. He'll spend more time trying to put across an unknown than he will on his own business. You have to have a heart of gold to do that . . ."

"Or a girl who has *sex appeal*," said Ruth, eyeing Diana.

Wilbur was approaching their booth with his red-head.

"Miss Delano," he said, "I'd like you to meet a little lady who, I think, has got what it takes—Miss Diana Fenimore."

The two women eyed each other and neither one came off second best.

"What *does* it take to parachute jump?" said Ruth. "I've often wondered."

"I saw your last picture," said Diana. "I wouldn't kid you, Miss Delano—it *wasn't* so hot."

Wilbur squeezed her arm. "She

means the picture, not you," he hastily added. Then, turning quickly to Gil, he said: "Mr. Benson—Miss Fenimore . . . Miss Fenimore, Mr. Benson!"

America's Number One Playboy stood up and took Diana's hand. He looked into her big blue eyes and found it quite an experience.

If Ruth was boiling before, she was sizzling now.

"Mr. Benson," said Diana, as though his dinner companion no longer existed. "This is truly the greatest moment of my life. I've followed everything you've done in aviation—and when Mr. Williams told me he knew you . . . well, I just couldn't wait . . . I just had to get this chance to tell you how much I admire. . . !"

Ruth was seized with a sudden coughing fit. She pressed a napkin against her lips.

"Did you choke on something, *I hope?*" asked Diana.

"Go right ahead," invited Ruth, with tiny icicles in her voice. "Don't mind me!"

Gil Benson was unperturbed. "Sit down," he said and they all slid into the half-moon, leather-cushioned seat. "You were saying . . . ?" he prompted, smiling at Diana.

Her blue eyes sparkled.

". . . how much I admired you," she said, "for the risks you've taken developing those new model planes. I heard you talk on the Hobby Lobby program when you said the day of space traveling was almost here. You really believe that, don't you, Mr. Benson?"

"I certainly do," said Gil.

"So do I," said Diana, with vibrant enthusiasm. "I just hope I live to see it."

Gil smiled. "You will," he said.

Ruth laughed. "You two should write for the comic strips!"

"Gil, old man," cut in Hollywood's

greatest press agent, "I know you're busy and we don't want to take up much of your time—but would you let me call the camera girl over and get a shot of you and Miss Fenimore together? It would mean a lot to this little lady."

Diana's face took on the color of her hair. "No, no, please, Mr. Williams!" she protested.

"That's all right, Baby," reassured Wilbur. "These things are done all the time in Hollywood." He snapped his fingers and motioned to the roving photographer.

"Mr. Benson," said Diana, "I hope you don't think . . . I want to make good in Hollywood all right . . . but that wasn't the reason I was anxious to meet you."

Ruth coughed lightly. "Of course not, dear—we understand!"

THE woman photographer was at their booth.

"Okay, Girlie," said Wilbur. "I want a couple of shots of Mr. Benson here, seated looking into Miss Fenimore's eyes. You know, the usual cozy two-some!"

The photographer leveled her camera.

Diana stood up. Her face was flaming. "Stop it!" she cried. "I won't have it! Don't you dare take my picture . . . don't you dare!"

The woman photographer lowered her camera, uncertainly, while an audience of diners looked on.

"Well, well," said Ruth, "quite an actress!"

"I mean it!" Diana insisted. "I'm sorry, Mr. Benson. I'm terribly sorry!"

Hollywood's greatest press agent was flabbergasted.

"Take it easy, Baby," he said. "You're kicking yourself in the face!"

Diana pushed past Gil Benson and grabbed Wilbur's arm. "Get me out of

here!" she commanded.

America's Number One Bachelor held out his hand. "When am I going to see you again?" he asked.

"Never!" said Diana.

"How about this week-end?" said Gil. "I've got a ranch in Arizona." He took out a printed card with the state map on it and circled a spot with his pencil, handing it to her. "That's my location. Since you're a parachute jumper, why don't you drop in on me some time?"

"And break your neck!" said Ruth.

Diana gave M.G.M.'s pin-up girl the eye. "You should drop dead, yourself!" she said.

"Gil, I hope you don't blame me for this," apologized Wilbur. "I'm just an innocent bystander."

Gil Benson laughed. "This has been very enjoyable. I wanted to see you anyway. I'm about ready to break the biggest story of my life. You'll have to come to the ranch to get the dope."

"That's swell," said Wilbur. "I could stand a few days away from Hollywood."

"Good!" said Gil. "I'll fly you to the ranch this week-end."

"Not me, you won't!" said Wilbur. "I'm taking the train. I'm too close to the stars as it is!" He turned to Diana. "Come on, Miss Fenimore. You've given me a *delightful* headache!"

CHAPTER III

GIL BENSON'S ranch was one of the show-places of Arizona. It comprised ten thousand acres. Its great stone ranch house, with wide veranda and mammoth fireplace, could house thirty guests at one time. It had been built on the brow of a mountain overlooking a vast expanse of Arizona foothills and desert. Gil Benson raised prize cattle and horses but, in the last

five years, something new had been added.

Beyond the sight of his ranch house and on a level, high plateau, some modern buildings had gone up. They housed newly-designed, mysterious machinery and a research laboratory. Half a mile from this stretched row upon row of Quonset huts. In these simple dwellings lived skilled workmen and their families, brought to Benson-Bar Ranch to work on this secret project. There now existed a colony of over two hundred employees who seldom left the premises and who were pledged not to speak of their activities to the outside world.

Rapidly nearing completion was a new and odd-shaped building which resembled a skyscraper. It was twenty stories high, built against a steep rock incline.

Gil Benson's ranch was not on any regular air routes and few planes passed over this area. The private enterprise was fenced off from the rest of his ranch and carefully guarded. Visitors might express curiosity but they were not enlightened beyond the statement that Gil was experimenting with some new principles in aviation. Even his closest friends could not pry from him any specific details. Jerry Torrence, Gil's chief engineer in charge of operations, was hard-boiled and dependable.

The project, now in its final stages, had run into millions of dollars which Gil had taken from the oil wells, left him by his father. All supplies and equipment had been brought to the ranch by truck from the nearest spur railroad, forty miles away.

It was at this end-of-the-line junction that Hollywood's greatest press agent arrived, late this Friday afternoon, to find his client waiting for him in a station-wagon.

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "If I'd

known you were this far off from anywhere, I'd never have come. I began feeling lonely a hundred miles away and now I'm actually homesick for dear old Hollywood!"

"Most everyone feels that way when they first get here," laughed Gil. He was dressed in usual cowboy style, with brimmed hat, bright red shirt, open at the neck; and riding pants. "But you'll soon get over it."

"Not me," said Wilbur. "I can't stand being alone. I've got to be with people."

"I'm people," said Gil.

"You're not enough people," said Wilbur. "And this air out here is too fresh. It hurts me to breathe it."

The station-wagon was bouncing along at fifty miles an hour over the rough desert road.

"And another thing," complained Wilbur. "I told you I didn't like *flying*!" His bag banged around in the back and he banged around on the seat. "I'm afraid you're trying to get even with me."

"For what?" asked Gil.

"For introducing you to that red-head," said Wilbur. "That was a great mistake and I admit it."

Gil dodged a boulder and the car almost left the road. "How is Miss Fenimore?" he asked.

"I hope she's left Hollywood," said Wilbur. "I gave her hell. Told her to go back to her stunt flying. Can you imagine a dame not wanting to have her picture taken with you?"

"It was quite a novelty. She interested me. I hope I see her again."

Wilbur almost fell off the seat. "Cut it out, Gil! I can't take any more!"

"I'm not kidding. I mean it! That girl really *had* something."

HOLLYWOOD'S greatest press agent groaned. "You tell me that

now. After I've returned her money to her and told her to get out of my life. I guess I must be slipping."

They were nearing the Benson-Bar Ranch. It had taken a little less than an hour which was considerably below par for this highway. As they approached the winding mountain road, leading up to ranch house, visible above, their attention was called to a low-flying plane which was circling around. Gil Benson slowed his car and peered out.

"Wonder who that is?" he said. "I've got the only planes around here and nobody's supposed to be up." He stopped his car and got out to watch the plane's maneuvers. "No, it's no plane of mine. That's a four passenger Stinson. I don't like that. Someone's snooping around."

Wilbur slid out of the station-wagon on his side and stared skyward.

"What's the matter? You got something out here you don't want people to see?"

"You're exactly right," said Gil. "Not till I'm ready. That's why I brought you out here—to show you."

The plane, after twice circling the mountain top, as though making sure of its bearings, was now climbing for altitude.

"The nerve of that guy!" raged Gil. "I'll have to check that plane—see who it is!"

Wilbur looked worried. "My gosh, Gil—what are you making out here—atom bombs?"

"You'll see in a few minutes!"

The Stinson, at about three thousand feet, suddenly banked sharply. Its cabin door on the earthward side opened and out shot a figure which plummeted downward, turning end over end.

"My God!" cried Gil. "Look at that!"

The plane, having discharged its human cargo, gunned away to the west.

The figure, growing larger each fraction of a second, was falling about a quarter of a mile across the desert.

"It's suicide!" said Wilbur, covering his face with his hands. "I can't look!"

"Pull that rip-cord, you damn fool!" Gil shouted.

Almost as he yelled there was the pistol-cracking report of a parachute blossoming out. The figure, clad in a blue jumping suit, was jerked to an upright position and swung crazily like a trapeze artist in the sky, at an altitude well under a thousand feet.

Wilbur took his hands from his eyes. "Gil," he said, "do you suppose. . . ?"

"That's who it is!" exclaimed Gil Benson. "It's *your red-head!* Well, I'm a son-of-a-gun! She *accepted my invitation!*"

AMERICA'S Number One Bachelor started running across the desert toward the spot where the parachute jumper seemed destined to land. He was followed by the short-legged Wilbur whose street clothes and shoes were hardly a match for the rough terrain.

They got within half a city block of the chutist when she landed, kicking and wrestling with the parachute harness in an attempt to avoid hitting a mammoth cactus plant. There was not quite enough altitude left to miss it and she sprawled on top with the parachute settling over her like a collapsed umbrella.

"Hey, Diana! Miss Fenimore!" cried Wilbur. "Hang on! We're coming!"

Hollywood's greatest press agent stubbed his toe and made a landing of his own, tearing the knees out of both trouser legs.

Gil Benson arrived on the scene and circled the large cactus.

"Greetings to Benson-Bar Ranch," he called. "Are you all right?"

"Yes," said a somewhat irritated voice from beneath the parachute, "but I'm slightly uncomfortable. Get me down out of here!"

Gil reached up and grabbed the silken folds of the parachute, pulling them off the jumper. Diana was entangled in the harness which, in turn, was caught in the cactus.

Gil Benson braced himself, gave a strong tug and she came down into his arms. He set her on her feet and helped her slip out of the chute. She looked up at him with her big blue eyes.

"You asked me to *drop in* some time," she said.

Gil laughed, "I sure did," he replied, "and I'm glad you're here."

Wilbur came limping up. "Ye gods, Diana! You jump out of a plane and I'm the one who gets hurt. Look at my knees! You owe me a new pair of pants!"

Diana removed her helmet and shook out her red hair. "There was quite a wind at two thousand feet," she said. "I wanted to get down through it before I opened up. That wasn't a very good jump."

Gil Benson had rolled up the chute and put it under his arm. "It was a pip, for my money," he said. "And to show my admiration for your nerve, I'm going to let you in on the secret project of my life. There's not a soul knows about it but the gang on my ranch."

Diana smiled. "I'm all eyes."

Gil Benson looked at her. "You can say that again!"

They started toward the car, with Wilbur bringing up the rear, as best he could.

"I should have stayed in Hollywood," he said, "where everything's *phony*. I'm not strong enough to face *real life*!"

WILBUR WILLIAMS' red-head was assigned the Number One

Guest Room in the ranch house of America's Number One bachelor. She needed only a few minutes to slip out of her flying togs and emerge in a stunning pair of green and gold slacks. When she reappeared all freshed up, with red hair and blue eyes aglow, she evoked whistles from all the wolves on the ranch.

"You're beautiful, Baby," said Wilbur. "Or have I told you *that* before?"

Diana smiled. "You are very funny, Mr. Williams. But—maybe I've told you *that* before!"

"Well, let's skip the whole thing," said Wilbur. Then he eyed her again. "But you're beautiful, just the same!"

This apparently was not far from Gil Benson's opinion. He immediately appropriated Diana and left Wilbur trailing along behind in a borrowed pair of pants which would have been four inches too long had he not turned up the cuffs.

Gil took them out past the other ranch buildings to a waiting jeep. He helped Diana in beside him and pushed Wilbur in the back seat.

"This isn't a disguised airplane, is it?" asked Wilbur. "I'm suspicious of you, Gil. Where are you taking us?"

"Just about half a mile. Get ready for a shock!"

Hollywood's greatest publicity agent moaned. "Listen, Gil, I'm not an explorer. I'm a writer. I don't know what you're up to but I want no part in it. You just tell me about it and I'll fix up a story. But, please, *include me out*!"

Gil laughed, as he spun around a rim of the mountain onto a smooth plateau, high above the desert.

"I can't describe the thing," he said. "There's never been anything like it on earth. You've *got* to see it!"

Wilbur gave a helpless gesture and subsided.

Diana's red hair was blowing in the breeze. She looked very much the out-door girl.

Gil Benson drove past long, low buildings where men were busy at work. They hailed him cordially as he went by and many watched the jeep out of sight.

"I've got a great gang here," said Gil. "There's not a man who wouldn't darn near give his life for me!"

"You've got a girl in the front seat," said Wilbur, "who darn near gave hers!"

Diana laughed. "A little jump like that was nothing. You should try it some time. It's good for your nerves."

"No, thanks," said Wilbur. "I'll take pheno-barbital."

They had now come into view of the towering wood structure erected against the mountain side. Two burly men stood guard at the locked door.

"Howdy, Mr. Benson," they greeted, almost in chorus, eyeing Diana and Wilbur.

"Open up, boys," said Gil. "I'm taking in my first visitors."

"Okay!"

The tallest of the two guards produced a key ring and inserted one key in the lock. The door swung open. Gil motioned for Diana and Wilbur to step inside. It was dark and cavernous. The door closed behind them as they both tried to accustom their eyes to the vast shadows.

"Don't be so mysterious," said Wilbur. "Give us some light!"

Gil reached for the light switch.

"All right, you two—here it is!"

THE large interior was suddenly flooded with illumination. Looming in front of them was a gigantic, unended, projectile-shaped metal body which pointed toward the heavens. Wilbur and Diana stared up and about, too petrified

with awe and astonishment to speak.

"That's my Manhattan Project," Gil announced. "My closely guarded secret—the dream of a life-time, about to come true."

"A space rocket!" cried Diana. "Oh, Gil—I mean, Mr. Benson—I think that's wonderful! Stupendous! There just aren't any words for it!"

Wilbur cleared his throat. "There's words for it all right! About a *billion* of 'em! This should be the world's biggest news story! Where are you going to shoot this thing?"

"To the moon!" said Gil.

Hollywood's greatest press agent was getting more and more excited. "Boy, I can think of a million gags! . . . All aboard for the moon! . . . Week-end excursions in space! . . . Buy your round-trip tickets now! . . . Get a load of green cheese! . . . Visit the man in the moon! . . . Brother, this is a *super-terrific-colossal-natural*!"

Gil Benson laughed. "I thought you'd go for this. What do you say we climb up this scaffolding and step inside?"

"Oh, can we, Mr. Benson?" said Diana. "I'd love to!"

Gil led the way. They mounted a circular staircase, built around the mammoth rocket, which was painted black on one side with a glittering mirror-like surface on the other.

"Looks like a huge penguin," said Wilbur. "What's the idea of the two colors?"

"Black absorbs heat and this mirrored surface deflects it," Gil explained. "The sun would burn us up if we didn't turn our mirrored surface toward it part of the time. When we want heat, we roll over on the black side. In this way, we control the ship's temperature."

"Very fascinating," said Wilbur. "But where do you get this 'we' stuff? This isn't a man-carrying rocket, is it?"

Gil laughed. "Of course it is!"

"You mean . . . now hold on, Gil . . . you don't really . . . are you actually going up in that thing?"

"Certainly! . . . That's the whole idea! And two of my men have volunteered to go with me. That's why I designed and built it."

Wilbur gasped. "Well, this beats me . . . I can't believe it. You've probably made this rocket of papier-mache or chewing gum wrappers! It's an advertising stunt! If you're really serious, Gil, this is *the most spectacular way to commit suicide ever invented!*"

"I don't think so at all," said Diana. "Why, a hundred years from now we won't think anything of traveling to Mars or Venus or some other planet. *The moon will just be a local stop!*"

They were still climbing.

"The earth is *my* local stop," said Wilbur. "How far *is* the moon, anyway?"

"About two hundred thirty-nine thousand miles," said Gil.

Wilbur grabbed hold of the slender railing and looked down. "Brother, I'm close enough to the moon right now! How long do you expect it'll take to get there—if you make it?"

Bil smiled. "Not more than *twelve hours.*"

DIANA'S blue eyes expanded. "Why Mr. Benson—do you mean it?"

Gil nodded. "I've had Professor Crowley working with me. He's an atomic scientist. We've solved the problem of fuel. Get this, Wilbur—it's the biggest feature of the space rocket story. *We've found how to extract the energy from a pound of gasoline!* We can create enormous power—enough to escape easily the earth's gravitational pull. That's why this rocket only needs to be two hundred feet long. It could have been even shorter. Very little of its capacity has to be taken up with fuel

tanks."

"I'm getting dizzy," said Wilbur, "and it's not the altitude." Then a thought struck him. "Holy smoke!" he exclaimed. "Do you realize . . . of course you do . . . then *you've developed atomic power*—that same energy can run ships and trains and machinery—*everything!* . . . Ye gods, Gil! You're *spoofing* me! This can't be true! This story's too big for me! It's too big for the world! Why, this is what all science has been aiming at!"

"I know," said Gil, quietly, "and the day we take off for the moon, Professor Crowley and I will make known our process for transforming gasoline into energy to the United States government."

They had reached an elevation near the great nose of the rocket. Gil led them across a catwalk and flung open a tungsten steel door. They stepped into a rather spacious circular cabin which contained bunks for sleeping built into the walls and soft, reclining seats, firmly fastened to the floor.

A passageway in the rear of the cabin led to other compartments: a small laboratory, a photographic room and a machine shop on one side; and a galley and store-room on the other. Behind these living and working quarters were the various units necessary for operating radar, television, radio, air-conditioning, production of oxygen and rocket power, all of which were controlled through a great instrument board set up in the forward part of the cabin.

"Say, this is all right," said Wilbur, looking around. "Just like being in a state room on board ship. But what's *up* and what's *down* in this thing?"

Gil laughed. "That's a problem," he said. "We'll have to adjust ourselves in relation to the position of the rocket at different stages of the trip."

DIANA looked up at the glass dome of the cabin.

"What peculiar looking glass," she said. "It ought to give you wonderful visibility."

"It will," said Gil, "but it's not glass—it's a new kind of transparent plastic which resists heat. There's going to be considerable danger out in space from ultra-violet and shorter radiations from the sun. This plastic is practically opaque to the ultra-violet without impeding the necessary light. Of course, we're apt to run into meteorites which would come crashing through, but then—they would pierce the metal walls of the rocket almost as easily—and this is a chance we'll have to take."

"It's tremendously exciting!" said Diana.

"Exciting!" said Wilbur. "Don't tell me any more. I'm scared to death."

"I want to know all about it," said Diana. "Of course you have to be sealed up in this thing. How do you breathe?"

"We'll maintain an atmosphere of helium-oxygen," said Gil.

"That's fine," objected Wilbur, "but let's say you get to the moon and want to step out and look around. What then?"

For answer, Gil Benson led them into the store-room small pantry alcove and pointed to three large strange looking, full length heavy metal suits, somewhat resembling a diver's outfit.

"These space suits will do the trick," he declared. "They contain a device for supplying oxygen and even a miniature walkie-talkie."

Hollywood's greatest press agent shook his head.

"You seem to have thought of everything, all right—but how about food and water?"

"We'll have to take that with us," said Gil. "Most of the foodstuffs can be dehydrated. I estimate that each

person will need about a gallon of water per day. If all goes well, I don't expect to stay on the moon more than two weeks, the first trip."

"Listen to that guy," said Wilbur. "He sounds like a *commuter* already!"

"There won't be anything to it in a few years," predicted Gil. "I just want to get the thrill of being the first one there!"

"Well, Brother, you're welcome to it! The only thrill I want is writing this up and saying I knew him *when*—and *IF*!"

Diana's attention was drawn to the large instrument board on the forward wall of the cabin, containing a bewildering array of buttons, levers and gauges. She walked over to it.

"Gosh," she said, "this looks more complicated than the gadgets on a Constellation!"

Gil Benson came over to her as she placed her hand on a lever.

"What's this?" she asked.

"That, young lady," said Gil, "happens to be the starting lever. When this ship is set to go, all I have to do is pull this lever down, the atomic power process begins—and we take off. It's so regulated that a shifting of this lever controls the speed. Fortunately, this power enables us to go as slowly as we desire, or as fast. You know, the friction of the air is so great that we could easily burn up like a meteor if we tore through our atmosphere at too high a speed. We only have to go seven miles a second to get beyond the gravitational pull of the earth."

Wilbur did some figuring with a pencil on the back of an envelope. "Only seven miles a second," he said. "That's four hundred and twenty miles a minute—*twenty-five thousand, two hundred miles an hour!* Let me out of here. *I can't stand it!*"

"Oh, yes you *could*!" said Gil. "The

human body can stand *any* speed. Perhaps you don't know it—but this earth is traveling around the sun at a rate of *twenty miles a second*—this very minute—and we don't even feel it! But what *does* affect us is a sudden *change* of speed. If an airplane pilot pulls out of a dive or makes a sharp turn, he's apt to '*black out*.' And because we'll have to leave the earth at a constantly increasing speed, the first ten minutes after our take-off are going to be tough. But once our top speed is established, we should be all right." *

Wilbur shook his head.

"I still want out of here," he said. "My body's affected right now!"

Gil motioned toward the door. "Well, you've got the main points of the story, anyway."

"I've got so much my brain is congested," said Wilbur. "How soon do you want to break this story?"

Gil smiled as they started their descent of the scaffolding.

"Not till I send out my invitations," he said.

"*Invitations!*" repeated Wilbur. "What are *they* for?"

Gil stopped and looked up the staircase at Diana and Wilbur who were following him.

"*For my take-off*," he said. "I'm throwing a big party and I want you to help with arrangements!"

CHAPTER IV

RUTH DELANO came off the set at M.G.M. after finishing a scene in her new picture: "To Have But Not To Hold." She was in a bad mood. Her leading man had flubbed some lines and she had been compelled to repeat the scene five times before a *take*.

"I don't know why I always have to get such rotten support," she said. "It's about time they were giving me some

good leading man like Van Johnson. I'm tired holding up these newcomers!"

The arrival of the studio mailman with a stack of fan mail did much to soothe Ruth's temper. She thumbed through the odd-sized envelopes. A large and distinguished appearing one, bearing the name "Benson-Bar Ranch," caught her attention. She slit it open and took out a handsomely engraved card. She shrieked at what she read.

GIL BENSON

Cordially Invites You

To Attend

A FAREWELL BUFFET SUPPER

To Be Held At Benson-Bar Ranch

Next Monday

On the Occasion of His Departure

by Rocket

TO THE MOON!

Arrangements have been made for your conveyance to the Ranch by plane—

from New York, Chicago or

Los Angeles

Supper at 6 P.M. with

Take-off Scheduled at Midnight

DRESS OPTIONAL

R.S.V.P.

"Oh, no!" screamed Ruth. "He must be *kidding!* As well as I know Gil

* For those that are interested in the technical aspects of rocketry a word of explanation here, may clarify Mr. Sherman's statements, exactly. The "seven miles per second" refers to the velocity required to eject any object, molecule or rocket, from the Earth's surface assuming that that object is given *one* initial impulse. If a gun of some sort were to hurl a projectile upward, the projectile leaving the gun-muzzle with a velocity of seven miles per second, it (the projectile) would leave the Earth. But in a rocket with a self-contained power system capable of being easily turned on and off, no specific velocity is necessary. The rocket could take off with any speed its operators chose, even as slowly as one foot per second, and still leave the Earth. Actually such a rocket would use the greatest speed consistent with the distance to be covered. In addition, low acceleration, to avoid injuring the occupants of the rocket, would be required.—Ed.

Benson, he never mentioned . . . yes, he did, too . . . but I didn't believe him! . . . That night in Sardi's!"

"What are you raving about?" demanded Director Don Stevens.

"Gil Benson!" shouted Ruth, so that all could hear. She waved the engraved card. "*The damn fool's going by rocket to the moon!*"

The announcement created a sensation which was increased when the studio doorman came in with a newspaper extra. He spread out the paper for all to see. M.G.M.'s pin-up girl took a look and let out another scream. A copyrighted, exclusive feature article by—of all persons—that little squirt of a publicity agent, "Wee Willie Wilbur"!

"Oh!" cried Ruth. "This is too much! The idea of Gil letting that brassy Wilbur get a break like this! Why didn't he let me in on this secret? I was just out with him last night!" She broke away from the excited actors and crew and ran to her dressing room. "Just wait till I get hold of that guy!" she cried. "Just wait!"

She grabbed up the telephone. Gil's line at the Beverly Hills was busy. It continued to be busy. Finally Ruth, exasperated, got the hotel manager on the wire.

"I'm Ruth Delano," she identified. "I'm a very special friend of Mr. Benson's. I know he probably has lots of people trying to reach him this morning—but I've got to get a call through to him."

"I'll see what I can do, Miss Delano," said the hotel manager. "Hold on!"

Ruth held on . . . and on . . . and on. She jiggled the connection violently. The operator at the Beverly Hills came on the wire.

"Get me Gil Benson," Ruth demanded.

"I'm sorry, Miss Fenimore," said the operator. "Were you disconnected?"

"Miss *Fenimore!*" raged Ruth. "This is Miss Delano! . . . If Miss Fenimore is on Mr. Benson's line, get her off! What's she mean—holding up the wire this way!"

"I'm sorry, Miss Delano," said the operator, "the line is still busy!"

Ruth Delano slammed up the receiver, then threw the phone across her dressing room.

AS GIL BENSON had carefully planned and surmised, the world reaction to his announced rocket flight to the moon was nothing short of terrific. His list of engraved invitations numbered a thousand. He was immediately besieged, yes—swamped, inundated, submerged by requests from thousands of others to be permitted to witness this greatest astronomic adventure in all earth history.

Gil's small office staff at the Benson-Bar Ranch had to be reinforced. Foreign governments made strong representations to be allowed to have observers present. The F.B.I. immediately moved in to protect the Benson-Bar Ranch against invasion by secret agents and saboteurs who might wish to steal or destroy much of world value contained in laboratory, plant and rocket.

Gil Benson may have intended this project as a private enterprise but its scientific importance was too great for it to be kept in this category. Despite the remoteness of Gil's location in the Arizona desert, hundreds of humans sought to reach his Benson-Bar Ranch by every means possible and see and learn what they could. It became necessary for the Governor of Arizona to dispatch a detachment of state militia to draw a cordon around Gil's ten-thousand acres and to challenge every unwelcome and uninvited visitor.

Newspapermen and photographers

tried every trick in their experience and a few new ones, to get on the premises, but Gil Benson had decreed that no one would be permitted to take pictures or get information beyond the details given out in his official, authorized news release, until the night of departure.

Wilbur Williams, Gil Benson's press representative, thus became the most sought after and most important man, next to his client, in America. He had to close his office and go into hiding. He couldn't even stay in his own apartment.

"This is hell," he said, "but I love it!"

Ruth Delano, M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation, was going slightly mad herself. Gil Benson had left his Beverly Hills suite and gone into seclusion. The papers had reported that he was under heavy guard for fear he would be kidnapped or attempts made by crackpots and foreign agents on his life. The fact that his announced trip to the moon was now only two days away and that this event was causing such a tremendous stir in governmental and scientific circles, let alone the spell-binding effect on the public mind, had made it impossible for most of Gil's friends to reach him in person.

Reporters, however, had trailed Ruth Delano, as they had every glamour girl Gil had been known to be interested in, with the hope that he would be seeking one or more of them out and could thus be caught and interviewed.

"I know that Gil Benson, if he were free to do so, would be getting in touch with me," Ruth told newspaper men.

"Have you accepted his invitation to see him off to the moon?" asked a reporter.

"I certainly have," said Ruth, "but I don't mind telling the world that I love Gil and I'm going to try to dissuade him from taking such a risk."

"Would you go with him if he gave you a chance?" asked another interviewer.

"I should say not!" rejoined Ruth. "Do you think I'm *crazy*?"

The newspapermen laughed.

"Who's this red-head Benson's been seen with lately?" fired one of them. "Do you know her?"

Ruth Delano stiffened. "Has he been out with her?" she asked.

"Oh, so you *do* know her?" shot another reporter. "Well, maybe you can give us a line on her. We saw them at Ciro's a couple of nights before this moon story broke and the lady wouldn't give out her name or permit any pictures. She's a mystery dame."

Ruth Delano was furious.

"And as far as *I'm* concerned," she blazed, "she's going to *remain* a mystery. I know nothing about the lady in question. And, if I did, I wouldn't tell you!"

"Thanks, Miss Delano. You're very kind," said a reporter. "We know we can always count on you to give us the low-down."

ON SUNDAY morning, one day before Gil Benson's projected trip to the moon, the Hearst papers came out with an entire section devoted to his life story. His dare-devil experiments and achievements were depicted, topped off by the current rocket venture—but the most colorful emphasis was placed upon Gil's widely varied romantic interests.

Under the caption: "The Big Ten in Gil Benson's Life," the paper published ten photographs of ten different glamour girls with whom America's Number One Bachelor and Playboy had night-clubbed.

The question was asked:

"If Gil Benson reaches his destination and becomes the first real

man in the moon—which of these Beauties will he choose to live with him in Lunar-Land?"

When Ruth Delano saw this story, she was pleased to note that her picture was given Number One Position—and the red-head was nowhere in evidence!

Early in the afternoon of the eventful day, the first influx of distinguished engraved card holders and especially permitted gate-crashers began arriving by plane and train and bus and car at the Benson-Bar Ranch. They were passed through tightly drawn lines of state militia-men who examined all credentials and turned back numerous imposters.

The desert, round about, was teeming with activity and filled with more humans than had ever been within miles of this area before. Coming in by air, many of the curious visitors could glimpse the rocket assembly plant and a mammoth canvas covering which concealed the space ship. They could also see signs of something being done in the open level stretches around this apparent launching site. But, once arriving, all comers were carefully shepherded to the big ranch house and kept without the great fenced enclosure. Those who had come early with the hope of gaining special favor were forced to spend their time playing miniature golf, taking a swim in the pool, walking about the grounds or sitting on the wide veranda overlooking the Arizona desert.

Arrangements had been made with one of Hollywood's most celebrated caterers and a large tent had been erected near the ranch house from which the buffet supper was to be served. No accommodations were provided for this great crowd over-night, it being taken for granted that there would be no sleep on such an unusual nocturnal occasion.

Hollywood's greatest press agent was everywhere in evidence. In other words, he was all over the place. He had to be. Gil Benson had depended upon him to do the major planning for the event, to act as official greeter in welcoming this excited mob of celebrities, scientists, government officials and others of unclassified importance, in addition to being master of ceremonies at the unveiling of the rocket itself.

"This is a publicity man's dream!" said Wilbur. "After this is over, my reputation won't be restricted to Hollywood. I'll be the *world's* greatest press agent!"

This afternoon Wilbur Williams was enjoying his authority. His client had told him to "shoot the works" in lining up entertainment and stunts which would amuse and beguile this thrill-expectant crowd. He was required to be a diplomat in the handling of various personalities and temperaments, but his Hollywood training enabled him to carry off this function with ease. He could say "yes" and "no" at the same time and mean both. And, if he didn't mean either, no one could tell the difference until it was too late.

GIL BENSON'S glamour girl friends, as they began arriving, gave evidence that each, in her way, had sought, through some ingenious design or quirk of evening dress attire or use of jewelry or hair-dress to carry out and express the moon motif. Then they stood off and jealously compared their own appearance with that of each new feminine arrival. This show and competition was worth coming miles to see, if only a minor prelude to the main event.

M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation was the last of the ten glamour girls to arrive. She had come by late afternoon plane from Los Angeles, in company with

other Hollywood stars. When she saw "Wee Willy Wilbur" greeting guests at the entrance to the big ranch house, she hurried up to him, her white satin evening gown sweeping the flagstones. She was wearing diamond half-moon earrings and a diamond crescent in her hair.

Wilbur saw her coming and spoke first. "Well, Miss Delano," he called. "You certainly are a delectable looking dish!"

Ruth extended her hand as a peace offering and whispered in his ear: "Wilbur, darling—I'm depending on you to get me to Gil Benson right away!"

"How's that?" said Wilbur, turning his head. "Try the other ear."

"You heard what I said, you little snob!" hissed Ruth. "If you know what's good for you, you'll do what I say!"

"Excuse me," said Wilbur, stepping to one side. "I think I see Eddie Rick-backer coming."

Ruth caught his arm. "You can't brush me off this way. I've got to see Gil. I've simply got to!"

"He's very busy," said Wilbur. "He's not seeing anybody—not yet. Last minute preparations and all that sort of thing!"

Ruth was beside herself and then some. "All right, you blackmailer! I'll let you handle my publicity. Now get to Mr. Benson!"

Wilbur grinned. "I'm not taking on any more accounts just at present. If Mr. Benson gets to the moon, this is going to be a full time job. I'm sorry, Sweetheart, you're a little bit too late!"

Ruth stamped her foot and broke a heel off her sandal.

HAL SPECK and his orchestra, one of Hollywood's name bands, had been hired to furnish the supper music. They were placed on the lawn by the

side of the big ranch house where long tables had been set so that guests could find their own places after being served at the caterer's tent.

The sun was swiftly sliding beneath the rim of the western mountains as the orchestra struck up its first selection and the diners commenced assembling. Most of them, entering into the spirit of the occasion, were gaily wearing evening dress. They were looking hopefully for some sign or sight of their host, the highly colorful, unpredictable, perhaps slightly insane, at least foolhardy Gil Benson. But he did not appear, much to the particular wonderment and distress of his lady friends.

Dusk came rushing over the landscape and, with it, a small airplane which swooped low over the desert multitude and suddenly flashed, on its under side, a bright, white half moon. The effect was startling and brought exclamations of pleased surprise.

"Maybe *that's* Gil Benson!" a guest suggested.

"It *could* be," said another. "You can't tell what *he'll* be doing next!"

But Wilbur knew it wasn't Benson or any part of his planned program. The plane circled twice more at a low altitude, flashing its luminous moon on and off. Then it turned back to the airfield and came in for a landing.

Wilbur dispatched a ranch hand in a jeep to see who had arrived. He returned, bringing a young woman in evening dress on the seat beside him. As she stepped down to the roadway and advanced toward the diners, Wilbur and all who saw her gasped their instant admiration. The front of the black velvet dress had a phosphorescent glow which caused the design of a half moon and stars to stand out with stunning effect. Flaming red hair fell loosely and softly to the shoulders, banded by a single brilliant star at the fore-

head. Word of this gorgeous creature was passed back to those beyond sight of her and not a few left their tables to get a close-up view.

"Ye gods, Diana," said Wilbur, when he could get to her. "What are you trying to do—break up this party?"

"I'm awfully sorry to be late," Diana apologized. "But there was a dress-makers' strike in Hollywood. I almost didn't get this dress finished in time."

"Well, you've just about finished me," said Wilbur. "You're *beautiful*, Baby. If I've told you that before, I say it again!"

Diana glanced quickly about her. She was conscious that she had captured the attention of all, that she was being "oh'd" and "ah'd" and "who-is-she'd?"

"Where's Gil?" she asked in a low voice.

"You can't get to him," said Wilbur, guardedly. "He's really installing some last minute equipment—the newest thing in radar loaned to him by the Army. He'll be lucky if he gets off on time."

Diana's blue eyes looked troubled. "That's too bad," she said. "I was in hopes he had seen my grand and glorious entrance!"

"You're not alone in that, Baby. There's a lot of disappointed females here tonight." He nodded toward several, including Ruth Delano, seated two tables away. "I'd keep away from those dames if I were you. They're apt to *hate* you!"

"I must get to Gil, somehow," said Diana. "I haven't gone to all this trouble for nothing."

Wilbur shrugged his shoulders. "Wish I could help you but no can do. Let me get you a plate of supper. Better get something on your stomach and Gil Benson off your mind."

He piloted her toward the caterer's tent, escorted by everyone's eyes.

WITH completion of the buffet supper, the tension of interest in Gil Benson's moon rocket was rapidly rising. Guests impatiently awaited transportation to the launching site, about a mile away on the high plateau on the other side of the mountain. A fleet of buses had been chartered for conveying purposes, back and forth. They stood lined up on the side of the private road, near the ranch house. Wilbur Williams had added a fantastic touch by having banners hung on each bus, with the printed words:

"TO THE MOON ROCKET"

This carried the suggestion that each visitor was going to make the trip, himself.

At nine p.m. a fanfare of bugles announced that the moment had arrived for the first bus load of spectators to depart for the rocket launching site. Lines quickly formed and there was good-natured jostling to be in the first contingent.

The sight which met the eyes of all as they came around the mountain and looked down upon the plateau, was unique on this earth.

Towering skyward, like a shadowy spectre, its bright black and white nose just protruding from its great canvas encasement, was the moon rocket. Its two hundred foot length was resting, in a semi-perpendicular position on a sleek runway built against the natural rock incline. Workmen, beneath, looking like pygmies, were arranging the guy ropes fastened to the canvas, preparatory to the unveiling.

In the great open space in front of the rocket, an outdoor amphitheatre had been formed with rows of several thousand folding chairs set up in a large semi-circle. There was a speaker's platform with railing and flag bunt-

ing at the base of the rocket and on one side of this stage, Hal Speck's orchestra had been placed. Standing beside the rocket was a great metallic portable stairway, its circular incline permitting workers and others access to any section of the space ship. The area was illumined by strings of overhead lights and great Klieg lights, not yet turned on, were banked on each side of the aerial monster, ready to reveal its every detail when the canvas shield should be dropped.

The prevailing atmosphere of excitement took on the nerve-tingling quality of a championship heavy-weight prize fight. Spectators to such events were lured by the promise of thrills in man's elemental combat against man. But in this case, interest was immensely heightened at thought of puny man's cosmic battle against the elements of time and space! This was a feast, a carnival, a state fair, a Hollywood opening, a sporting event, a launching and a new era exposition—all rolled into one! And Wilbur Williams' imagination and press agent wizardry had been equal to the occasion. How could a good publicity man, given carte blanche and an unlimited bankroll, miss?

Wilbur had arranged a program designed to acquaint his select audience with the nature and purposes of this first man-made attempt to escape the ball of earth and explore the universe. With the crowd now fully assembled and sitting in expectant wonder, Hollywood's greatest press agent, as master of ceremonies, mounted the dais and, following an arresting fanfare, with the spotlights turned on him, began to speak.

"LADIES and gentlemen of Tomorrow," he said, his voice ringing out over the loud speaker system. "You are gathered here tonight under

the stars, but, presently, the rising moon will appear over the mountain top and very shortly after that moment arrives, you will witness the first take-off from this planet of a man-carrying rocket, bound for earth's one and only satellite—two hundred thirty-eight thousand, eight hundred fifty-seven miles away!

"We are only sorry that the several billion humans on this earth cannot be spectators with you tonight, but many millions will observe the take-off through television, hear its description by radio and see the event pictured in the newsreels. If Gil Benson and his two courageous associates reach their destination and are able to return to earth, they will bring back with them information of staggering importance, not only to us now living but to those yet unborn!

"The era of inter-planetary travel is just around the corner. Man has dreamed for centuries of flying to the moon. He first imagined that he might grow great birds to transport him there. Then he thought of attaching engines to these birds to aid in such a journey.

"And when man saw that the morning dew disappeared in the rays of the sun and seemed to be drawn toward the sky, he even dreamed up the idea of enormous bottles filled with dew—operating, I suppose, on the theory that all a space traveler had to do was sit on top of the bottle and he'd eventually be eating green cheese on the moon."

A thunder of laughter rolled up in front of Wilbur.

"You laugh at this?" he continued. "Well, how would you like to try to go to the moon in an iron chariot made of lodestone, the magnetic properties of which were calculated to be powerful enough to draw you upward? . . . Still rather primitive, you say? But give Man a chance. He hadn't been on earth very long.

"The first hot air balloons came late in the Sixteenth Century. When a Frenchman introduced hydrogen gas to give them new lifting power, visionaries cried: 'Now for the moon!' But the closest approach was two miles above the earth. Even so, this was progress.

"Next came the lighter than air ship, then the flying machine. The moon didn't seem so far away now. Maybe not, but Astronomy threw a monkey wrench into man's dream machinery. There was no atmosphere on the moon—no air or water. You couldn't breathe after you got there. And to get there, you'd have to escape the earth's gravitational pull. There, Little Man, what are you going to do about that?!

"Well, you people all know that Man came right back with the answer: Rockets! Jet propulsion! A new fuel—perhaps liquid oxygen and alcohol! Maybe even atomic power—and, with the promise of atomic power—*space ships!* . . . What Man had dared dream, Man could one day accomplish!

"Which brings us up to tonight and the perfection of Man's dream.

"I give you now, the Number One Space Pioneer—the man whom Destiny has selected to fulfill the dreams of all men in all past time—your host and fellow human—*Gil Benson!*"

THERE was a roll of drums and a mighty fanfare. At its climax, workers tugged the guy ropes and the great canvas covering billowed away from the gigantic space ship, as floodlights suddenly beamed on. The smooth, glistening, stream-lined surface, half black and half luminous, of this Goliath of the skies, was revealed to awe-inspiring view.

Emblazoned along each side, in mammoth letters, was its name—"GOOD-BYE, WORLD!"—first sight of which provoked shrieks of excited laughter.

A second mighty fanfare brought a focusing of lights on the cabin door high up on the rocket. It swung open and the figure of a man in *evening dress* appeared. He stepped out upon the platform of the portable stairway, at his elevation, and stood in front of a microphone. Beneath him a great roar of sound came involuntarily from the throats of all assembled. This figure stood quietly, for perhaps two minutes, looking down upon the ecstatic sea of upturned faces. Then he spoke.

"Greetings! I appreciate, in the name of Science and humanity, your acceptance of my invitation to be here tonight and the effort you have made to come long distances to witness our departure from earth.

"Jerry Torrence, my chief engineer, and Professor Crowley, the atomic scientist, have elected to accompany me. We feel that, despite the known hazards and hazards yet unknown, we stand an excellent chance to reach the moon and, also, to return. We could not be so assured of such a possibility were it not for the fact that Professor Crowley, in working with us in our laboratory, has discovered a method for extracting the energy from a pound of gasoline . . . !"

A great gasp of surprise went up from the audience, followed by almost unbelieving cheers.

"Yes," Gil continued, "you heard me rightly. The age of atomic power is *here*—and we are using it for the first time in our space rocket tonight. In five—ten years, at the most, thanks to the genius of Professor Crowley, this power will operate the machines of earth and bring Mankind complete release from drudgery.

"Even apart from this, the United States Army is preparing to send unmanned space rockets to the moon, containing recording instruments and pow-

ered with liquid oxygen and alcohol as fuel. The advantage we enjoy, through use of atomic power, is that we do not require enormous weight taken up by fuel tanks and can carry, instead, more scientific equipment, supplies and such food and water as we will need on our journey.

"I'm indebted to the United States Army for the loan to me of their latest radar devices with which they are even now contacting the moon through high frequency waves which are bouncing back in something like two and four-tenths seconds.

"I'm also indebted to the General Electric Company of Schenectady for permitting me to install a hitherto untried sending and receiving radio set which beams radio waves of such high frequency that we are confident they can penetrate both the Heavyside and Appleton layers which surround the earth, at respective levels of sixty and two hundred miles, so that we can keep in constant touch with this planet during our travels and while on the moon.

"These new instruments, in conjunction with the television apparatus we are carrying, will permit us to scan some of the moon's surface and project back to earth the actual scenes as we are witnessing them. You know, of course, that television waves travel in a straight line and from the vantage point of the moon they can be beamed directly to earth. In fact, could a television station be established on the moon, we could then beam all television shows to the moon and relay them back to earth on a straight line so that they would be receivable everywhere."

THERE was a constant murmur of excited comment running throughout the crowd.

"I will have to leave it to reporters, photographers and scientists to point

out, in detail, the enormous possibilities and values to be derived from this moon trip—if we should be successful.

"Control of the moon is more important than you may think. Could an unfriendly nation eventually colonize on the moon, it could destroy any country on earth by atomic bombardment. It will be our plan, upon reaching the moon, to lay claim to it as a possession of the United States of America. We are aware that certain foreign powers will soon be attempting moon trips of their own. We naturally hope to be first.

"And now, I know that all of you are wishing you might be permitted to examine this moon rocket at close range. We still have a little more than two hours before take-off time. If you are willing to climb these portable stairs, I will be glad to greet you personally and let you pass in and out of the cabin. I must ask you to keep moving and to touch nothing. You will stay on the right, single file, going and coming. The guards will assist you.

"Welcome to '*Goodbye, World!*' . . !"

Wilbur, in anticipation of the rush to be among the first on board the space ship, had left the platform while Gil was speaking and, motioning to Diana to follow him, led her to the portable stairway.

"This is the best I can do for you, Baby," he said. "You can be the first one up to see Gil."

Diana's blue eyes caressed him. "I could almost kiss you," she said.

"You're *beautiful*, Baby," said Wilbur. "Remind me to tell you that some time when there's not a crowd around."

"Do you think Gil will like this get-up?" she asked.

"If he doesn't, he's crazy," said Wilbur. "I mean crazier than he is now, if that's possible."

"He's not crazy," said Diana. "He's

wonderfull!"

She started up the steps.

Gil had just finished talking and the rush was on. Ruth Delano was among the first ten in line.

"I saw you tip her off," she called to Hollywood's greatest press agent. "That's no fair, Wilbur, and you know it!"

Diana turned about on the steps and came down. She walked up to Miss Delano in the line.

"I heard what you said. You can see Mr. Benson first, if you want to. I've changed my mind. I want to see him last!"

M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation stepped out of line.

"Oh, no you don't!" she cried. "You don't take advantage of me *that* way! Go right ahead, Dearie. *I'll* see him last!"

The end of the line, still forming, was some distance away but Ruth Delano headed for it, with Wilbur's red-head following. Gil's other glamour girl friends looked on curiously from their positions in the line, as the two women passed.

"What goes on?" one of them called to Wilbur.

"Yes—what's up?" cried another.

"They're going to wait and see Mr. Benson just before he takes off!" Wilbur explained.

"That's a good idea!" said another glamour girl. "I think *I'll* wait, too!"

"Me, too!" said another.

The contagion was on and glamour girls began stepping out all up and down the line, and trailing to the rear.

"Ye Gods!" said Wilbur, "I told Gil it was dangerous to invite all those dames here! If they start fighting over him, he'll be lucky to leave this earth alive!"

Ruth and Diana, reaching the end of the line and being good-humoredly kid-

ded by various guests who sensed what was going on, turned to face one another.

"You first," said M.G.M.'s pin-up star, with mock courtesy.

"No, *you* first," insisted Diana.

"I'll see him last," said Ruth. "I'm sure Mr. Benson would prefer it that way."

"I would regret very much to have to use force," said Diana. "But *I* am seeing him last!"

There was a flurry of shouts and the two rival women looked around to see almost a dozen other rivals descending upon them.

"You see what *you* started?" accused Ruth.

"*I* started?!" said Diana. "How dare you say that?"

She advanced toward Ruth but, before any damage could be done, the two were surrounded by other glamour girls, perhaps as pulchritudinous a collection of femininity as one seldom sees in any compact spot.

Reporters and photographers, quick to appreciate this fact, went to work. Flash light bulbs popped as the girls struggled for positions at the end of the line.

"Girls! Girls!" shouted Wilbur, running up. "Remember—you are all *ladies*—or *are* you? . . . Calm down! . . . Take it easy! . . . You won't look like anything when Mr. Benson gets to see you! . . . Cut it out or I'll have the guards keep you off the rocket!"

This last threat had an effect and the beauties abandoned their bargain counter tactics. Ruth and Diana still brought up the extreme end of the line but declared a temporary truce by standing side by side.

"We'll see who's last when the time comes," said Ruth.

"And I know who that's going to be!"

said Diana.

MEMBERS of the state militia kept the line of distinguished guests moving rapidly past Gil Benson who stood just inside the cabin door and shook each hand. The guest then made a quick circuit of the cabin, with much of the equipment roped off. There was opportunity for only a good glance about and then he was ushered out the same cabin door and directed down the steps.

The time required for the end of the line to be reached consumed almost two hours, as was estimated.

It had been a fatiguing day for Gil Benson with all manner of last minute details, usual unforeseen happenings and pressure of last earthly demands which could not be denied. Even now, as he was playing host, Professor Crowley and Jerry Torrence, his two rocket associates, were outside making final check-ups, to be sure everything was in order.

Everyone had something special they wished to say to Gil or some good luck charm to leave with him, all of which ate up additional seconds and energy. But America's so-called Number One Playboy, about to embark on what many privately termed "the greatest screwball adventure of his career," was understanding and gracious. Knowing human society as he did, he realized that he was still expected to live up to the public conception of him.

"Leave it to Gil Benson! . . . Good old Gil! . . . Nonchalant as ever! . . . Acts like he's preparing to take off on a routine coast-to-coast flight in his plane. . . . Nothing to it, according to him . . ." This was representative of general impressions expressed behind Gil's back—but, outwardly, he was greeted by a variety of well-meaning witticisms.

"Remember me to the man in the

moon!"

"Do you think you'll find any girls up there? If not, why go?"

"What's the matter, old boy—tired of earth?"

"What're you going to do if the moon doesn't have any night clubs?"

"If Alaska doesn't hurry up, you'll be making the moon the Forty-Ninth State in the Union!"

"Pick out a good piece of real estate for me up there!"

"I know some people I'd *like* to send to the moon. Will you take 'em along?"

"The government should have gotten out a 'moon stamp' so we could mail letters to the man in the moon. Can you imagine what those stamps would have been worth—if you make the return trip?"

"If you run out of fuel—will you come back on a moon beam?"

"I guess you'll be able to keep up your *spirits*—I see you're taking off while the moon is *full*!"

Gil good-naturedly parried such obvious wisecracks as these with a smile or quip of his own.

AS THOSE visiting the rocket reached the ground again, they resumed their seats to await the dramatic moment of its departure, all now excitedly discussing its mechanical marvels and thrilling at the thought that they had actually been inside a space ship which might reach the moon.

"I was aboard the 'Queen Mary' just before she made her maiden voyage—also the 'Graf Zeppelin,'" said one. "But it never gave me a sensation like this!"

"And nothing else will," replied another. "When vessels start going to the moon and other planets, you've seen all modes of travel possible in the universe!"

As they had been speaking, from over

the mountain top, could be seen the rim of the rising full moon. It cast an increasing white light upon the nose of the rocket pointed in its direction.

"Gives you an eerie feeling to think of shooting toward the moon in that thing, doesn't it?" remarked another guest, and shuddered.

Hollywood's greatest press agent, his collar wilted, his tuxedo wrinkled and his temper ruffled, pushed his way up the stairs, past the end of the line and Gil Benson's glamour girls so that he might reach his client first with a word of warning.

"How you holding out, Gil, old man?"

"Confidentially," said Gil, in a low aside as he was still meeting people, "I'll be glad when I can take off!"

"Well, you may be sorry you haven't taken off already," said Wilbur. "Your girl friends are just outside. They're coming in a bunch—and they've got blood in their eyes!"

"What do you mean?" asked Gil.

"They each want to bid you the last farewell," said Wilbur. "It all started with Ruth and Diana—then the rest followed. Boy—get set for a stampede!"

Gil laughed. "Wilbur—you just haven't learned how to manage women!"

"Not when they're like that red-head or Miss Delano," Wilbur admitted.

"Leave 'em to me!" said Gil. "Are they here now?"

There was a hubbub of female voices.

"That's them!" said Wilbur.

"Let 'em in!" ordered Gil.

The steel door was half shut and the last guest had been ushered out, with only the feminine contingent remaining of the great number who had tramped up the stairs, around the cabin and down to earth again.

"Okay," said Wilbur, swinging open

the door. "You asked for it!"

In came the glamour girl avalanche! A blonde in the lead gave one cry: "Oh, Gil, darling!" and threw her arms about his neck, kissing him rapturously on the cheek. She was pulled away by a tall brown-eyed, auburn-haired girl who kissed him on the other cheek. This girl was almost instantly replaced by a short, vivacious brunette who had to jump off the floor to encircle his neck. She found Gil's lips, a bit one-sidedly, and clung to him, smearing lipstick. But now the girls were coming by twos instead of ones and Gil's face looked bruised and battered with all shades of purple and red imprints.

"Hey!" he called out. "Not so fast! One at a time! I want to enjoy this!"

There was a jabber of comment.

"Oh, Gil—you're wonderful!"

"My man in the moon!"

"I'm going to miss you, darling!"

"It's cold up there, dear. I'll give you a warm reception when you get back!"

"Be careful, Sweetheart! Don't take any chances!"

"Don't forget me, Gil. I'll be *moon-ing* for you!"

FINALLY, with the initial assault over, only Ruth and Diana remained who had not bestowed their affectionate regards—and each had held the other off. The glamour girls shrieked at sight of their lipstick handiwork as Gil, glancing at himself in a wall mirror, gave a helpless gesture and sank down in a chair.

"You've got me, girls!" he said, not even trying to remove the abundant evidence of impetuous osculation. "I'm done in! For once in my life, I've got enough kisses to last. . . ." He looked up and grinned, "until the next ones come along!"

This brought the threat of another direct frontal attack but he held up a

restraining hand.

"It's great to see you all here," he said. "You all look gorgeous! I mean it—each one of you different and lovely!" Some of them laughed. "Well, maybe just a little shopworn after that wrestling match," Gil conceded, "but still lovely. . . . I guess you know now that I've had a lot on my mind these last few years . . . and you've all helped me enjoy my spare moments. I like you all a lot and I've had some great times with each one of you. Let's hope we can have some more—when I get back . . . !"

"You said it, Gil! I'll be waiting for you!"

"Remember my phone number!"

"Call me first, Gil. I haven't seen you lately!"

"You're a great guy, Gil. You've given us all a break!"

"May the best girl win!"

Hollywood's greatest press agent stepped forward.

"Sorry, girls. You've just about wrecked Gil now. It's only half an hour till take-off time . . . so would you mind . . . I know parting is such sweet sorrow—and all that stuff, but . . . !" He began gently pushing them.

The glamour girls started moving toward the cabin door but each had to shake Gil's hand and kiss him properly this time . . . and each one naturally tried to outdo her predecessor in planting the kiss to be remembered.

Ruth and Diana stood by, looking on.

"This is disgusting," said Ruth. "I wouldn't make such a scene in public."

"And you're not going to make one in private, either," said Diana.

"We'll see about that," said M.G.-M.'s pin-up star.

WILBUR, at last, having herded everyone out but Gil's two most

ardent admirers, looked toward them, worriedly.

"Come on, you girls, make up your minds!" Then he turned to the guards standing near the door. "Okay, soldiers," he said. "These two are the last ones. You can go now."

The militia men nodded and stepped out.

"Gil," said Ruth. "I'm afraid you're going to have to choose between us. This Miss Fenimore has been acting like a wild woman. She seems to think she has some special claim on you!"

"Oh, no I don't!" denied Diana. "But you wanted to see Gil first—so I offered you my place in line and said I'd see him *last*—and you didn't like it!"

"That's true, Gil," testified Wilbur. "Diana could have been first in. . . ."

"You keep out of this!" charged Ruth. "It was all a trick! Miss Fenimore's a little smoothie . . . I'm surprised, Gil, that you'd let her . . . !"

"That *does* it!" said Diana.

Wilbur's red-head leaped forward, pinioned a startled Ruth's arm behind her back and, applying pressure, ran her across the cabin to the door.

"Out you go!" she said.

"Gil, are you going to let her get away with this?" shrieked Ruth.

Diana's action had come so fast that Gil Benson and Wilbur Williams had been unable to restrain her.

"Help!" cried Ruth.

"Let go of her!" Gil shouted.

But Diana, giving a final push, shoved M.G.M.'s pin-up girl out onto the portable stairway and, before Ruth could recover her equilibrium, Diana reached out and pulled the heavy door shut, clamping it in place.

"What do you think you're doing?" an amazed Gil demanded.

Diana wheeled, eyeing the man who was about to take off for the moon and Hollywood's greatest press agent.

"I'm sorry, Gil—but I just couldn't take any more from her! . . . You may love her—and all that—but . . . !"

"Open that door and let her in!"

"*I won't!*" she defied.

Gil Benson made a grab for Diana. She ducked and ran to the front of the cabin. He followed.

"I'm going to have to put you out of here!"

"You'll have to catch me first!"

Gil lunged. She dodged again but he caught her mass of red hair. Diana reached out and grabbed hold of the instrument panel. He yanked to get her free. Her hand closed over a lever, pressed it down. . . .

"Let go of that!" yelled Gil "*My God!*"

The space ship gave a great lurch. Hollywood's greatest press agent, America's Number One Playboy and a red-head who wanted to crash Hollywood—went crashing to the floor.

"Now you've done it!" Gil cried.

"Done what?"

"*We're off!*" he said, "*to the moon!*"

CHAPTER V

THE sudden and unexpected departure of Gil Benson's moon rocket, "Goodbye, World!" caught radio announcers, television operators, newsreel camera men, photographers, newspaper reporters and the audience of invited guests totally by surprise.

There was a frightening roar, a brilliant flash, a white vaporish cloud—and it was gone!

The closest eye-witness to this dramatic and unscheduled disappearance was M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation, Ruth Delano, who saw the huge rocket vanish in one great blinding swish, almost from her grasp. The force of its take-off was largely spent downward but the air repelled in its wake sent the portable

stairway rolling and careening. It swayed dangerously but did not tip over.

At the base were two men who had intended to be passengers on this trip to the moon. They were Gil Benson's chief engineer, Jerry Torrence, and the atomic scientist, Professor Crowley. They had just started their ascent to board the rocket when the blast of atomic power sent it hurtling into space.

In the split second that followed, everyone was too dumbfounded, horrified and stunned to move or speak. Then, when the realization of the apparent catastrophe had come, humans once more began to function, many excitedly and incoherently.

The radio engineers were frantically trying to get their networks cleared so that the account of this terrific happening could go out over the air.

The eye of the television camera, cheated of its mechanical vision, could only scan the bare launching site where the mighty space ship had been.

Photographers were shooting the uncanny cloud of white vapor which still hung in the night air, obscuring the full moon.

Newspaper men, at portable typewriters and telegraph keys, were trying to compose a lead which would adequately describe the unbelievable thing which had just occurred.

As for the distinguished guests themselves, largely untrained in the meeting and reacting to tragedy, this stupendous and unheralded take-off had been all but nerve-shattering.

Somewhere in space, only one minute after its departure, Gil Benson's "Goodbye, World!" was tearing through the earth's atmosphere, heading for the moon, without having waited to say goodbye.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience," an on-the-spot announcer

was saying, "*The space rocket has gone!* We don't know yet what happened but it left unexpectedly and ahead of schedule. We don't even know who was on it although we are reasonably sure Gil Benson was aboard. But Professor Crowley and Jerry Torrence, his two associates, were left behind.

"Even now, we can't believe it. We hardly know how to begin to tell you. We didn't expect to go on the air with this event until fifteen minutes before midnight when the space ship was supposed to depart. It is quite obvious that something suddenly went wrong.

"The last visitors, some girl friends of Gil Benson's, had just left the rocket and one of them—we're trying to find out who she is—was still up on the stairway adjoining the ship when it took off. It's a miracle she wasn't killed!

"We hope, in a few minutes, to bring Gil Benson's two associates to the radio and get their possible explanation of this tremendous mishap . . . Stand by, ladies and gentlemen . . . we're just being given some special information . . .!"

The radio announcer's voice broke off and there followed a spine-tingling silence as listeners throughout the world waited and wondered.

AT THE scene of the rocket launching site, there was still pandemonium. All channels of communication were confused and clogged. Everyone was now trying to talk at once, to give his version or conjecture of what had happened. A frantic Jerry Torrence and Professor Crowley were being besieged from all sides to explain, as best they could, what had occurred. They were finally dragged in front of a microphone.

"Here you are, ladies and gentlemen," said the announcer, coming back in the air. "I have with me now Gil

Benson's two right hand men, Professor Crowley and Jerry Torrence. These two gentlemen are best qualified to tell us what took place. As you all know, this space ship left earth ahead of schedule and without warning. Professor Crowley is the atomic scientist who developed the atomic power which was to be used on this flight. Professor, can you hazard a guess as to what happened?"

The voice of Professor Crowley had a noticeable quaver in it.

"Someone would have been compelled to shift the starting lever. I'm reasonably sure that Mr. Benson would not have done this."

"Is it possible, Professor Crowley," questioned the announcer, "that Gil Benson may have decided, at the last moment, he shouldn't permit you men to take this risk with him—and that he elected to go off alone?"

"No, I doubt that very much," said Professor Crowley.

"Mr. Torrence, what do you think happened?" asked the announcer.

Gil Benson's chief engineer was also shaken.

"It's pretty hard to figure," he said. "Everything was ready for the take-off. I noticed, when we started up to board the rocket that the cabin door was suddenly slammed shut. I saw a woman standing above on the stair landing and then—woosh! . . . just like that—the rocket was gone!"

"Could some form of sabotage be a possible explanation?"

"No, I don't think so. Of course, we can't be sure about anything yet. It's a terrible thing."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Torrence and Professor Crowley. Ladies and gentlemen, you have just heard from the two men closest to Gil Benson, who were supposed to make the moon trip with him. They are at a loss to

know how this space ship could have taken off prematurely . . . And now, ladies and gentlemen, we are bringing you the woman who so narrowly escaped with her life and who was the last to leave the ill-fated rocket . . . Ladies and gentlemen—this is M.G.M.'s movie actress, Ruth Delano . . . Well, Miss Delano—you've just gone through a frightful experience. I don't want to tax you too much, but the whole world is anxious to learn as many details about this catastrophe as possible. Do *you* have any idea what happened?"

M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation was trembling, half from shock and half from indignation.

"Yes, I have!" she said. "I think a *woman* is behind this!"

"A *woman*!" said the announcer. "How could that be?"

"There's a woman in that rocket!" revealed Ruth. "A red-head!" She became hysterical. "I hate to say this—but we quarreled over Gil Benson—and she threw me out!"

"Threw you out! You mean—from the rocket?"

"Yes—she's a terrible person—a wild woman! The men couldn't do a thing with her!"

"Men—*what* men?"

"Mr. Benson and Wilbur."

"Compose yourself, Miss Delano, if possible," soothed the announcer. "You say there was a woman on the rocket and now you mention a man named Wilbur. Are you sure . . .?"

"Yes, of course I'm sure! Wilbur Williams—Mr. Benson's press agent. He's gone, too! *All three of them!*"

"You don't say!" said the announcer. "Now we're beginning to get the picture. You think this woman . . .?"

"I'm positive!" cried Ruth. "She's caused this, somehow. She pushed me out and shut the door and locked it before the men could stop her. They

must have struggled with her . . . She's irresponsible . . . she was a *parachute jumper!*"

"A *parachute jumper!*" exclaimed the announcer. "What was her name?"

"Diana somebody," said Ruth. "I don't know . . . Oh—I can't talk any more. Gil Benson was my dearest friend. Excuse me, please . . . I'm feeling faint . . .!"

Ruth Delano permitted willing hands to lead her away.

IN THE cabin of Gil Benson's moon rocket, five seconds after the take-off, wild things were happening.

"I don't want to go to the moon!" cried Wilbur. "I don't want to go anywhere! Let me out of here!"

"Lie down!" ordered Gil Benson. "Both of you! Crawl over to those bunks! Strap yourselves in! Hurry up!" He dragged himself to the instrument panel, grabbed the starting lever which also regulated the rocket velocity, and turned it to a slower speed. "We're ascending too fast. Our bodies can't stand it!"

"I can't breathe!" gasped Diana. "I feel faint . . .!"

"My head!" moaned Wilbur. "I'm dizzy!"

"Oxygen!" said Gil, "We're going to need oxygen . . . I can't see!"

A gray mist was forming in front of his eyes. The pull of gravity under their terrific initial acceleration was almost blacking him out. His hand groped toward the instrument panel and pressed a button. There was a whir of machinery in a rear compartment of the rocket. A mixture of helium-oxygen began flowing into the cabin.

Wilbur was flat on the floor beside his bunk.

"My legs . . . my arms!" he gasped. "They're so heavy . . . I—I can't lift them!"

Diana had fallen into a chair, her back braced against it. Her face was contorted. She was trying to fasten a strap around her but arms fell useless at her sides.

Gil was on his knees and clutching the control lever, making a tremendous effort to stay conscious. His eyes were fixed on the instruments, dials and gauges.

"Let's go back!" panted Wilbur, fighting for breath. "Get us . . . down . . . out of here!"

"Can't!" said Gil. "We're . . . in . . . for . . . it . . . now! We've got . . . to go . . . the whole way!"

"Ye . . . gods!" said Wilbur.

With the speed of take-off reduced to what it should have been, at three times the pull of gravity instead of the extreme high of six, the physical bodies of the three space passengers began to regain their normal functioning. This too rapid acceleration had greatly reduced blood pressure in the brain and had threatened possible rupture of blood vessels as well as affecting their breathing and momentarily deranging their circulation. As the three commenced to emerge from this first harrowing crisis, with the rocket now under control, knifing steadily upward through the earth's ever thinning atmosphere, they stared speechlessly at one another.

LOOKING up through the great forward dome of the cabin, they could see the glowing features of the moon. They had already reached such an altitude, free from lower level dust particles, that the moon now presented a sight never before beheld by human eyes. It was actually frightening to look upon—a jagged ball of sublime desolation—a fantastic pock-marked, ugly, leering, luminous face. Each second, it seemed, its rugged contour of

shining peaks, yawning craters and barren rocky deserts became more and more distinct. They were traveling now in the bright reflected light of the moon which cast an awesome illumination over the cabin.

Wilbur finally spoke. He turned reprovingly to Diana. "Baby, this is all your fault!" he said. "If this is your idea of a publicity stunt, you won't live to cash in on it." A dire thought hit him. "My gosh!" he added, "And I won't either!"

"I'm terribly sorry," said Diana. "I didn't mean it! Honest!" She looked toward Gil Benson. "I know, Gil, you'll never believe me."

"I'm afraid I won't," said Gil, grimly, his eyes on the instrument panel. "It's very peculiar that you grabbed the one lever which could have sent us off—the lever I identified for you that weekend at the ranch!"

"I was mad and I was excited," said Diana. "I didn't know what I was doing."

"And, because a woman lost her head," said Gil. "I'm about to lose a life's ambition and the world may lose the possible benefits of this scientific project."

"I said I was sorry," Diana repeated. "I don't know what else I can do now."

"You can jump overboard," said Wilbur. "You can blame me, Gil. I ruined your rocket trip the day I introduced you to this baby."

Gil Benson, satisfied that the space ship was operating on automatic pilot, as it should, turned away from the controls. "Well, I'm stuck with you two," he said, "and I've got to put up with it—but it's not going to be easy."

"We'll do anything we can," said Diana. "I know something about mechanics. And I'm not afraid—much."

"I'm afraid—period!" said Wilbur.

"I don't know what *I'd* be good for on a trip like this. I guess I'm just going along for the ride!"

Gil smiled. "Well, you're good for a laugh, anyway," he said. Then he glanced at his wrist watch. "We've been up exactly six and one half minutes."

"Is that all?" groaned Wilbur. "Ye gods! I'm ten years older!"

"If my calculations are right," said Gil, "we'll be getting beyond the gravitational pull of the earth—in about three more minutes."

"Let's go back to earth!" begged Wilbur. "Where is it, anyway?"

Gil pointed to a cabin window. "You can see it best on this side," he said.

The three space travelers looked out. So much had been happening of immediate concern to them that they had temporarily forgotten the earth.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed Wilbur. "It's enormous! But, my gosh, it looks like it fills the sky below! Or is it below? Boy, would I hate to have that fall on us!"

"It looks flat," said Diana, "No, I can see now, it's curved around the edges. But is it *dark*?"

"It will be dark," said Gil, "until we get out of the earth's shadow and can see the sun."

"How interesting!" said Diana, "I'm beginning to like this! Please forgive me, Gil. I'll make up to you for what I've done. I don't know how, but I'll do it." Then she started laughing. "Your face,—it's still covered with lipstick. Here, let me wipe it off." She looked about on the floor for her bag.

"I haven't time for that now," said Gil. He returned to the instrument board and studied the dials and gauges.

AS HE did so, Wilbur cried out: "Hey, Gil! Something's happening! My body's getting light. I feel like a feather. Ye gods, Gil! What's

wrong now?"

"Hang on!" said Gil. "We're out of the earth's atmosphere."

"I've turned the power off. There's no more gravity. We're falling through space toward the moon!"

As Gil was speaking, their bodies were becoming lighter and lighter, till they seemed to have almost no weight at all.

"Oh,—there's my pocket book!" said Diana. It had lifted from the floor and was floating past her.

"I feel silly," said Wilbur, "Like a run-away balloon!"

"You'll have to get used to it," said Gil. "That's the way you're going to feel for a long time. I anticipated this condition. That's why I placed this railing around the cabin to hang onto. In just a minute, I'll get you something that will help."

Gil, sliding his hand along the rail, half floated to the rear of the cabin where he entered the galley which contained food and other supplies. He presently emerged with three pairs of iron-soled shoes. He handed one pair to Wilbur but let go of them too soon and they floated toward the ceiling.

Wilbur released his hold on the bunk and tried to stand. His body followed the shoes. "This is a fine how-do-you-do!" he said.

Gil reached up and grabbed him, pulling him down with ease. He placed one of Wilbur's hands on the rail.

Diana was seated, gripping a chair. "Oh, Wilbur," she said, "you looked so funny up there." She shifted her position, relinquished her hold and took off, herself. "Oh, catch me, somebody!" she cried. Her figure rose lazily toward the ceiling, turning a complete somersault.

"Not half so funny as you look right now," said Wilbur. "While you're up there, Baby, will you get my shoes?"

They were floating along beside her. Diana obligingly extended her hands and retrieved them. Gil worked his way along the railing to a point where he could reach up and grab Diana's dress, which was now over her head.

"You're beautiful, Baby," said Wilbur. "I've never noticed it so much before."

Gil pulled Diana down and rightly upended her. She handed Wilbur his shoes.

"I'd slap your face," she said, "if I weren't afraid of letting go of this rail."

Hollywood's greatest press agent clutched his bunk, fastened the strap around his body and began putting on the iron-soled shoes. "I don't see what good these are going to do," he said. "They float just like everything else."

"You'll find out in a minute," said Gil. He handed a pair to Diana. "Put these on," he commanded.

"These clumsy things?" said Diana. "They're not my style."

"Suit yourself," said Gil, "but the next time you go to the ceiling, you'll stay there."

Diana put the shoes on!

Gil, slipping on a pair of these specially made shoes, himself, returned along the railing to the instrument board and then pressed a button. He turned to Wilbur and Diana.

"Now put your feet flat on the floor."

They did so, wonderingly.

"Unstrap yourselves," he ordered.

This done, Wilbur and Diana exclaimed their surprise. They remained seated, apparently fastened to the floor.

"There's an awful pull on my feet," Wilbur reported.

Gil grinned. "There's a magnetic field on the floor of this rocket," he said. "We figured it would act as a substitute for the field of gravity and that anything made of iron, or attached to iron, would feel a downward pull."

WILBUR stood up. "This is swell," he said. He lifted one foot from the floor. It floated out in front of him. He put it down and it stayed down. Then he lifted the other foot. He looked slightly ridiculous but he could navigate. "This will take a little practice," he announced, quite proud of himself, "but it's a great idea, Gil. It'll work!"

Diana preferred to remain seated for the time being.

"Would you be interested to know how many miles we now are from earth?" Gil inquired.

"I'm afraid to ask," said Wilbur. "I can't stand being up high. It took all the nerve I had to climb those stairs into the rocket."

Gil was looking at his instruments calculatingly.

"We've been gone from earth about twenty minutes now and we're about nine thousand miles away."

"Nine thousand!" said Wilbur. "Ye gods! That's terrible!"

Gil smiled. "If our take-off, the first few seconds had not been faster than planned, thanks to Diana, we would not have been quite so far away. We're really running slightly ahead of schedule."

"I'm glad of that," said Diana. "I hate to be late places."

Gil's face sobered. "We've been so busy thinking about ourselves—what do you suppose the people are thinking back on earth—especially Professor Crowley and Jerry Torrence? . . . They must be about out of their minds."

Wilbur grinned, foolishly. "Why don't we write them a postcard," he suggested, "And say, 'Having wonderful time. Wish you were here?!'"

Gil turned to his newly installed radio set. "Well, what have we got all
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THE dining car rocked slightly as it sped over the middle western plains. This easy motion helped to settle the brown-eyed, aesthetic young man's dinner. Philip Morrison was indeed aesthetic, but he

was not an artist. He was a surgeon.

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the soft voice of Kit, his wife, and feel the firm hand grip of Dr. Ezra Potter, congratulating him. Ah, life was good!

The voice of an immaculate waiter intruded gently on his musing.

"Will theah be anything else, sah?"

"I could use a little more of this excellent coffee," Philip grinned.

The beaming, dusky waiter returned in a moment with a gleaming, silver pot of coffee.

Surrounded by the luxury of the streamlined dining car, memories of four years in the south Pacific weren't nearly so painful. Philip remembered the shocking transition from the Port of Embarkation and the more or less peaceful cruise to the flaming, banging, mud-soaked hell of his tiny medical unit, so close to the lines that he could occasionally hear the chatter of enemy officers giving commands. The dreary, endless days and nights, punctuated by explosions, curses and screams, gradually made his mind sink into a plodding, thoughtless, gray monotony. His staff around him changed many times, but he had been left as though forgotten. Each day took him a few miles closer to Tokyo, but each mile robbed such terms as liberty, victory and home of any meaning. But one day, it all changed. The surroundings were the same; he was the same man, doing the same job. But there was someone else there, someone nobody could see and only Philip could hear: The Voice. The unexplainable Voice! At first, it came only occasionally when Philip's mind would falter and his fingers would hesitate in the path of saving lives. The Voice would speak issuing terse directives, showing his benumbed fingers the way.

As time passed, The Voice became more familiar; it was there at every surgery, an invisible, invaluable consultant. To Philip, it was all very

strange, but in such circumstances men's minds do not question too deeply, do not philosophise.

Back in the United States, out of the maze of quadruplicate forms, one fact became evident to 'the powers that be.' Somewhere in the war torn Pacific theater was a young surgeon, only a captain, whose percentage of cures was nothing short of miraculous. And so it was that shortly before the end of the war, Captain Philip Morrison was brought back and after three days rest at the Port of Debarcation, was transferred to the staff of one of the largest Army General Hospitals.

AS PHILIP began to treat returning veterans, he took no notice of the unusual interest taken in his work by the other physicians. Now that he had time to rest and think, he was primarily concerned with The Voice. The first explanation that occurred to him was that his mind was deranged. Yet this explanation was unsatisfactory because The Voice told him things that he, himself, could not know. It told him of conditions existing in his patients that were unsuspected and The Voice was invariably right. The Voice had never spoken to him directly, but had only whispered, like a person making comments at a play.

One night, a little more than two weeks after his arrival, Philip decided to try to talk to The Voice. In the quiet of his quarters, Philip asked the question.

"Can you hear me, Voice? Can you hear?"

The answer came immediately. "I'm here, Philip."

Dr. Morrison felt a momentary chill.

"Who are you?"

"A friend," The Voice answered calmly. "Names don't matter."

"What are you?"

"Still a friend," replied The Voice.

Philip sighed. "Very well, then. Why are you doing this?"

"For the same reason that you are a physician. I like to help people."

"How long are you going to keep doing this?"

"For as long as you wish."

"I *must* know who you are!" insisted Philip.

"Why?"

"Today is a good example," Philip replied. "Major Long asked me whose technique had I used on that iridectomy and I nearly answered it was the Voice's technique."

"You have a point there," agreed the Voice. "If you like, you can refer to me as George Spelvin."

Philip thought for a moment. The name was very familiar. Then he had it!

"That's an actor who wishes to remain anonymous!"

"Yes," The Voice replied, "but it's a name."

From that time on Philip carefully schooled himself in thinking of the Voice as George Spelvin or Dr. Spelvin. There were times when the name slipped into his conversation with others, but as George Spelvin had prophesied, it aroused no comment.

Soon after that interview, he discovered he could communicate with George by merely thinking a question rather than speaking aloud. He found too, that George would supply the answer only when Philip could not.

About a week later, he was promoted to the rank of Major and became the Assistant Chief Surgeon at the hospital. Each night, before an important surgery, Philip would talk with The Voice and they would carefully plan the following day's work.

In three months, his record was beyond belief. One hundred twenty-eight

cases, one hundred, twenty-six cures! No fatalities! The two who were not yet pronounced cured were definitely improved on the road to recovery.

ONE afternoon, Major Morrison was summoned to the office of the Commandante, Colonel Lewis Goddard. The Colonel looked up as Philip entered.

"Come in, Major. Have a chair."

Philip sat down. "Thank you, sir."

The Colonel leaned back expansively. "Have a cigar?"

He lit it for Philip. "I've got something very important I'd like to discuss with you, but I want to discuss it with you as doctor to doctor, not as Colonel to Major."

"All right, sir," Philip assented.

"Up until now you have been considered essential. However I have been communicating with the Surgeon General. We realize continued military service will be detrimental to your career unless you plan to remain in the army.

"I have here on my desk, a letter from the Surgeon General stating that in view of your record and achievement, they are offering you the permanent rank of Lieutenant Colonel, but I assure you that you won't remain a Lieutenant Colonel for long. It's my firm conviction that if you remain in the service, in a very few years you will become the next Surgeon General."

"Now this may sound strange to you, but my advice as a fellow physician is to decline and go into civil practise for yourself."

"That is a little strange, sir," Philip said, "coming from a regular army man."

"I realize that," the Colonel replied, "but in my estimation, someday you will rank with Lister and the other medical greats and I feel that to one

as gifted as you, the army has little to offer. I'm going to leave the entire matter in your hands, though. I have your discharge made out and I have your permanent commission prepared. Your signature on either of these documents would make it effective."

AS PHILIP rode along on the train, he wondered if he should have accepted the silver oak leaves, but then another look at his honorable discharge made him sure he had made the right choice. He folded the discharge and deposited it in his inside coat pocket. He left two bills on his check and strolled out of the diner without waiting for the change.

Philip glowed with pride as he caught the voice of an Air Force sergeant talking to a pretty young girl.

"Look, Sue! There's Major Morrison! They wrote about him in *Yank*. He's the doctor they call Miracle Man Morrison!"

"Are you sure?" the girl asked.

"Of course," the sergeant replied. "I've seen lots of his pictures. They say he can—"

The voices faded out as the vestibule door closed behind Philip. As he sank down in his pullman seat again, the thought of Kit was uppermost in Philip's mind. Except for those three precious days at the Port of Debarcation, he hadn't seen her in nearly four years. He had decided against her coming east with him because housing was so difficult and traveling even worse. But now at last he was going home. He could see her standing in the station, wearing the same frilly pink dress she had worn when he last saw her, the sunlight glinting in her taffy colored hair and looking at him with those china blue eyes. It made his throat feel tight.

Philip supposed that Dr. Potter

would be there too. His boyhood admiration for Ezra Potter had not dimmed with the years. Except for him Philip would today have been a civil engineer. The thoughts of home, family and friends warmed him. All the misery and horror of four years faded away. It now seemed no more important than a bad dream.

His introspection paused only momentarily as he moved to another seat while the porter made up his berth. Soon he was between cool, crisp sheets, still dreaming the same dreams. The soft rush of incoming air from the air conditioner added to his detached isolation. The sound-deadening curtain prevented intrusion of outside noises. The waking dreams became sleeping dreams.

CHAPTER II

IT SEEMED only minutes until the gentle hand of the porter shook him awake. He heard the voice fuzzily.

"Wake up, General! We's comin' into Salt Lake in twenty minutes!"

"Thank you, porter."

Philip hurriedly dressed and shaved and just eighteen minutes later the porter was giving him a final brushing.

"Theah General, you all looks just like new."

Philip smiled and handed him a folded bill.

The conductor came through the vestibule of the car calling, "Union Station! Salt Lake City! Union Station! Change trains for San Francisco and Los Angeles!"

Philip reached for his hand grip, but the porter snatched it into the air.

"I'll carry it for yo' all, General."

Philip was half surprised. "All right, George."

The porter looked at him apprehensively. "Ah— ah was wonderin' if

yo' all would mind givin' me yo' autograph? Ah got de book right heah. Ah likes to get de autograph of all de famous people dat rides in my cah."

Philip chuckled and added his name to the book as the train drew to a stop.

"Are you sure you've got the right man?" Philip laughed.

"Deed ah is, Mr. Miracle Man, deed ah is!"

Philip handed the book back to the porter as he stepped down from the vestibule and received his bag in exchange.

"Thank you, General, thank you!" The porter flashed him a brilliant smile.

Philip didn't see the smile. All he could see was Kit coming across the platform. She was warmly dressed and there was no sunshine. In fact, there was snow on the ground. But aside from that, reality was better than the dream. He held her close for a moment, very close, and buried his face in the collar of her coat.

Kit began to cry, tears streaming down her face.

"Oh, darling, darling," she whispered hoarsely. "I've waited so long! Last night was the worst of all."

Philip kissed her tears away. "There, there, dearest. Don't cry! I'm home, home to stay! I'll never leave you again!"

Dr. Potter broke in. "I realize this is an impolite thing to do, but I've got to break this up. Come on you two, let's get in out of the cold before you catch pneumonia."

"Dr. Ezra!" exclaimed Philip. "Ezra, you old pill peddler! It's good to see you!" He gripped his hand firmly.

"Here, here now," protested Ezra Potter. "These old carpals and phalanges won't take such treatment! Ease up there, young man!"

Philip laughed and let go of Ezra's

hand and linked arms with Kit and Ezra pulling them into the station.

"O. K. You two can wait here while I see if I can dig up a cab."

"No need to do that," replied Potter. "I've got my car here."

As soon as they were in the car, Philip asked, "Have you had breakfast yet? I didn't get up in time so I'm starved!"

"I thought I'd wait and have breakfast with you," said Kit.

Philip smiled at her and squeezed her arm.

"I'm an early bird as usual," said Dr. Potter, "but I could use a cup of coffee."

"Shall we go home, dearest?" asked Kit.

"Oh no!" laughed Philip. "I'm not sharing my wife with any kitchen this morning."

"Well then, my boy, where to?" asked Ezra.

"There used to be a little French restaurant about three blocks down the street from the Hotel Utah. Is it still there?"

"Oh yes, I know the one you mean," replied Dr. Potter. "I had lunch there yesterday."

SOME time later they were in the warm, cozy atmosphere of the little restaurant. After a short glance at the menu, Philip announced enthusiastically:

"I think I'll have ham and eggs with lots of fried potatoes!"

"Me too," said Kit.

"Oh no you won't!" chuckled Dr. Potter. "Remember, you're on a diet, young lady."

"A diet?" Philip asked, raising his eyebrows. "What for? Is something wrong?"

"Not exactly wrong," Dr. Potter smiled. "Shall I tell him or do you

want to do the honors, Kit?"

Kit blushed. "Well, you see Phil, the diet isn't exactly for me. It's for—a—for Philip, Jr."

Dr. Potter seemed to find something intensely interesting to look at on the other side of the room. The waiter had come and gone before Kit and Philip were fully aware of their surroundings again.

Afterward, Philip tried to remember if he had gotten his coveted ham and eggs but he couldn't.

His returning life was a happy glow. The third day after his arrival home, he was surprised to receive a letter. He read it through twice and then a third time to make sure his eyes didn't deceive him. Then he let out a whoop.

"Kit!" he called. "Come here and see this!"

Kit appeared in the doorway. "What's the matter, darling? What is it?"

Philip waved the letter in her face. "It's from Dr. Stuart Atherton! He wants me to share his practise with him. Not only that, the trustees at the clinic want to call it the Atherton-Morrison Clinic! They want to build a complete new surgical wing and put it under my supervision. Isn't that great, honey?"

A worried frown appeared on Kit's face. "Are you sure it's all right, dear? It's a little unbelievable!"

"Here! Here! Read what he says in the last paragraph!" Philip said, excitedly pointing.

Kit read aloud. "We are offering you this position because of the outstanding, almost miraculous ability which you have demonstrated during the war. Your name was suggested to us by a prominent member of our medical society when we sought nominations for this position. Our letters to your associates and to your former

commanding officer have disclosed that your nominator, if anything, has underrated your ability. Speaking for myself, as well as for the other members of the society, we would be honored to have you as associate supervisor of our Clinic. Sincerely yours, Dr. Stuart B. Atherton, President, American Foundation for Clinical Medicine."

Philip's eyes were shining. "Do you know what this means? It means we're in! No struggling to start a practice! No worrying about bills! And the baby's future is assured!"

Kit was a little overawed. Philip grabbed her and kissed her violently, leaving her more dazed than ever.

"Darling, this is the greatest break that could happen!" Philip continued. "Just think! Only five years ago I was an interne, then four years in the army and now I'm offered a position like this!"

He stopped suddenly as he saw a stricken look on Kit's face.

"What's the matter? Aren't you happy?"

"Of course I'm happy for you, dear," she replied in a small voice, "but I was counting on having some time with you before you started working."

PHILIP threw back his head and laughed. "So that's it! Don't you worry about a thing. It'll be at least two months before this is all settled and I'm going to devote every minute of that time to you."

Even as he spoke, a sudden flash of apprehension swept over him. Could he do it? Was the Voice still with him? Was George-Spelvin still ready to tell him the little, the vital things that meant the difference between life and death to some of Philip's patients and success or failure to Philip?"

Almost before the question formed in his mind, the gentle voice of George

echoed in his brain.

"I'm still here and anxious to go to work. But I won't deny you a vacation. I think you need it."

"Thank God!" Philip muttered.

"What did you say?" Kit asked.

"Nothing, Kit. I was just thinking out loud."

Kit smiled and snuggled in the hollow of his shoulder.

"Sweetheart," she said questionably, "I forgot to mention it, but I asked Ezra over for dinner tonight. Do you mind?"

"Certainly not," Philip chuckled. "I've been anxious to see the old quack again. I want to consult him about one of his O.B. patients."

Kit frowned in mock anger. "How dare you say things like that about my doctor!"

"He may be your doctor but I'm warning you, if he doesn't take good care of you, I won't pay the bill."

Kit wrinkled her nose. "Fool!" she laughed. "Well, you can stay here and gloat over your letter if you want to. I'm going to fix lunch. I'm hungry!"

"A very important symptom," Philip pronounced gravely, nodding his head. He dodged quickly and the dust rag that Kit threw at him missed by inches.

Kit was an excellent cook and the dinner proved it.

Dr. Potter heaved a big sigh as he pushed his chair back from the table.

"Kit, I've got to learn to cook steaks like you do! I promise the secret will not reach any other ears but mine."

"Emphatically no, Ezra!" Kit laughed. "The only way I can ever get you over here is to promise you a steak. If I told you the secret, you'd never come. You'd cook your own!"

"Young people like you don't want an old duffer like me hanging around all the time," Dr. Potter protested.

"That's where you're wrong!" Philip

answered. "We do want an old duffer like you around. Except for when you met me at the train, I haven't seen you for three days. That's a fine way to welcome home a brother sawbones! And your protege at that!"

"That's where I made my big mistake," Ezra said seriously. "I talked you out of becoming a civil engineer and packed you safely off to medical school and what thanks do I get? You're in a fair way toward taking all my patients away from me. Seriously Philip, about the only thing I hear any more in my office is 'Would it cost much to have Dr. Morrison consult with you?' Or 'You're a friend of Dr. Morrison; could you get him to have a look at me sometime?'"

"How did they find out I was back?" Philip asked.

"I thought you learned to read before you went to medical school!" Potter teased.

EZRA got up laboriously from the table and went into the hall. He returned with a folded newspaper in his hand.

"I haven't read this yet," he remarked, "but it's a pretty safe bet your name is in it somewhere."

He studied the paper for a moment. "Yup! Here it is on the front page! I'll read it to you."

"Miracle Man to Practice Here."

Philip's mouth gaped open. "What!"

"Be quiet, you faith healer! Let me read the rest," Ezra muttered. "An unconfirmed report states that Dr. Philip J. (Miracle Man) Morrison will head the new surgical division of the Atherton Clinic. Dr. Stuart B. Atherton, president of the American Foundation for Clinical Medicine and chairman on the Board of Trustees for the Atherton Clinic, declined to comment. Other reports say that Dr. Morrison has not

definitely accepted the Foundation's offer."

Ezra paused. "The rest of it is the same old junk! It says that you won the Congressional Medal with fifty-five oak leaf clusters, the Croix de Guerre, the Iron Cross, the Lead Triangle and the Order of the Bath!"

"What are you talking about," Philip sputtered. "I haven't a single decoration and you know it!"

"Well frankly," Ezra replied, "I don't know what the rest of it *does* say but it's all about your glorious past at any rate."

Philip grabbed the paper out of the older man's hands.

"Would you like some dessert now, Ezra! I baked a nice lemon pie just for you."

Ezra didn't get a chance to answer Kit. Philip straightened up from the paper. "This is preposterous," he protested. "It even suggests here that I had something to do with the discovery of penicillin! I was barely out of knee pants when it was discovered! The next thing they'll do is credit me with being the father of antiseptic surgery!"

Ezra laughed heartily. "Well, any time you get too much of a reputation you can throw some of it my way if you want to."

Kit was not to be sidetracked. "Would either of you two mighty medical minds like some pie or shall I throw it out?"

"My dear, I can think of nothing I would like better," said Ezra.

Kit's eyes softened as she looked at Philip. "How about you, my little genius?" she asked.

Philip colored. "Of course, I would, Sweetheart. I don't know where I'm going to put it, but I'll try."

He turned to Ezra. "I wish you'd come over more often. The only time I get well fed is when you're here."

"Beast!" Kit called from the doorway. "Your piece of pie will be very small! One more word and it will be non-existent!"

"There, you see what I mean, Ezra?" Philip said conversationally.

KIT flounced out the door in simulated anger. As soon as she was gone, Philip leaned toward Ezra and asked anxiously, "Is Kit all right, Ezra? I've been wanting to talk to you about her."

"I would say that you are in more of a position to know about that than I am," he answered dryly.

"Oh for heaven's sake; I'm serious!"

"Well, if you don't think I know what I'm doing, there's a new chap in town named Morrison. You might give him a try."

"Don't be silly, Ezra!" Philip protested. "I trust you more than I trust myself when it comes to Kit. It's just she means so much to me and I want to be absolutely sure."

"Oh come on now, Philip! There's nothing to worry about! *You* aren't going to turn into one of these worrying fathers, are you? Calm down and take it easy! You can take my word for it, Kit's as sound as a new dollar. We can't have you worrying all over the place. You have important things to do! Remember, I brought one Philip Morrison into the world, and I think I can do it again now that I've had the practice."

Philip smiled. "I guess you're right. I'll try to keep the gray hairs down to a minimum."

"By the way, Philip, what about that position with Atherton? Have you decided to accept?"

"Yes, I have," Philip replied. "I'm going to send him a letter tomorrow morning and arrange to talk it over with him. I'm curious to find out who nom-

inated me for the position. I haven't —" Philip stared at Ezra Potter. "I think I see the light; you are, are you not, a member of the American Foundation for Clinical Medicine?"

"Well, ah—yes," Ezra admitted uncomfortably, "but—"

Philip cut him off. "No buts," he said. "You were the one who put up my name, weren't you? Now admit it!"

"I may have said something to that effect," Ezra said slowly as though trying to remember.

Philip put an arm around his shoulder. "You old fraud!" he laughed. "Pretending to be surprised when I read the letter to you! You should know by now that you can't keep things like that from me."

"It's no more than you deserve," Ezra insisted.

Kit re-entered the room. "You just leave the brute to me. I'll see that he gets what he deserves," she said ominously.

Philip turned around. "I'll give you one guess, darling, as to who nominated me for the post at the Clinic."

"Here, here now," Ezra grumbled, "go pin your medals on somebody else! I merely thought that Philip was just the man for the job. The Clinic needs him as much as he needs the Clinic. More, perhaps! Philip has a great gift and I think he'll be able to utilize it."

Philip gave Ezra a penetrating stare, but the older man's face gave no hint of what he was thinking. Before he went to sleep that night, Philip puzzled over Dr. Potter's remark but it remained as obscure as when it was first uttered.

CHAPTER III

PHILIP wearily dropped the scrub brush into the sink and dried his

hands as he walked into the surgeon's dressing room. Hastily, he stripped off his shirt and white duck trousers and tossed them into a nearby hamper. A few minutes under the shower restored his lagging energy. As he was dressing, Dr. Atherton entered with a glass of tomato juice and a plate of crackers.

"Care for a little bracer, Doctor? This always makes me feel better."

Philip thanked him and sipped the tomato juice.

"This was your fifth surgery," continued Atherton, "and after watching you work, I'm becoming convinced that you *are* a Miracle Man."

Philip blushed. "I'm beginning to hate the sound of the word miracle, Dr. Atherton."

Atherton laughed. "Frankly Philip, I'd much rather have the internes call me 'Miracle Man Atherton' than any of the titles I now bear. And you must admit that some of your work today looks just a little bit like sorcery. By the way, how did you know that ulcer had perforated? I just glanced at the specimen a moment ago and from its appearances, I would say the gastric walls were intact up until half an hour ago."

"Well, it was more of a guess than anything else," Philip admitted.

"It was an exceptionally good guess!" Atherton commented. "If I had been treating that man, I probably wouldn't have operated until I had tried further treatment. I might very well have lost him."

Philip adjusted his tie in the mirror. "I don't like to take too much credit, Dr. Atherton, for playing a hunch."

"Can't we dispense with this Dr. Atherton, Dr. Morrison relationship? You and I are going to be working together for a long time. At least, I hope we are!"

"All right, Stuart."

"That's better Philip. Now suppose when you get through, you drop up to my office. I want to show you some plans for our proposed new wing."

"Has the architect finished them already? I'll be right up to see them."

IN THE succeeding weeks, the foundations for the new wing were poured and it began to take shape. In it would be all the facilities that Philip could desire. Philip's reputation grew apace with the new wing. By the time the wing was completed and ready for use, the fame of 'Miracle Man Morrison' had spread to every corner of the nation. By then, Philip had treated a total of two hundred and twelve cases without a fatality! Some surgeons in other sections of the country had stated that in their opinion, Morrison was having a remarkable run of luck. Those who had seen Philip work, however, had roundly denounced the dissenting voices, saying that anyone who had watched 'The Miracle Man' at work, could see that he was a genius and that even his simplest cases were nothing short of phenomenol.

The opinion that Philip was just lucky seemed to have no effect on the people. They flocked to be treated by him and his patients regarded him as something akin to religious awe. The percentage of pronounced incurables who left the Atherton-Morrison Clinic whole, stunned the medical profession. Some were completely cured, the majority vastly improved and as one eminent diagnostician said, "Of over fifty cases pronounced incurable by their own physicians, who have been treated by Dr. Morrison, I can find only one whose condition was not so markedly improved as to be regarded as a veritable miracle. Even this comparison is unfair since that one case is yet undergoing treatment at the Clinic

and I should not be surprised to see him restored also."

It was even rumored that in New York City book makers were giving high odds as to when Philip would lose a case.

Atherton summed it all up one day, while talking to Philip.

"My boy, you're becoming as big a craze as chain letters or jazz. In this case, however, I think it's a very beneficial craze."

With Philip, the burden of his knowledge about his own successes was becoming very difficult to bear in silence. Three publishing companies had offered him large sums to write a textbook on surgery. Daily there were letters from universities and schools asking and pleading with him to lecture. To all these, Philip could only reply in the negative since the real secret of his success could not be imparted to others.

Philip did qualify his refusals by stating he was yet unprepared to disclose his diagnostic and surgical methods, but that he would do so when they had been perfected.

Each day silence became more difficult as his techniques strayed further from the accepted ones. Philip did not allow his new knowledge and skill to slip away from him. He would carefully study each patient until he was certain of the diagnosis, using all of the bits of knowledge that The Voice imparted. Of late, only rarely would The Voice fail to confirm his diagnosis. Throughout the operation, it was now infrequent that The Voice would speak except to say, "Good!" or "Well done!" Or to voice some other approbation.

ON THE occasions when The Voice would suggest new things, Philip would carefully make notes of it afterward and that night would study these notes until he understood the reason for

the suggestion or the departure from usual procedure.

Yet, throughout all this blaze of success, there rose and fell a flicker of doubt. Somehow Philip couldn't understand the reason why The Voice was helping him, and not helping other doctors. Even though there was no valid reason for Philip's doubts, they would not be denied. Always in the back of his mind was the feeling that there was something wrong. Time and time again he thrust these nagging doubts down, only to have them return. Often he had the urge to talk it over with Kit, yet he did not want her to be unnecessarily worried until after the baby was born. There was no one else he could talk to since try as he might, he could find no valid explanation for The Voice. Not even old Ezra Potter would understand the presence of George Spelvin, M. D.

Philip's associates noticed little lines about his eyes and mouth and advised him to take it easier. Some even advised him to take a few days off but somehow Philip couldn't. Daily the feeling grew on him that something was terribly wrong. Each morning he awoke with a foreboding of some disaster. This only made him apply himself harder, learning, studying, working. Somewhere in his mind, lurked the knowledge that The Voice would disappear, and if it should, Philip wanted to be ready.

One morning, Philip awakened with the sense of foreboding stronger than usual. When he reached his office, nothing seemed amiss, yet the feeling grew stronger as the morning progressed. At ten o'clock, Philip put aside the notes he had been making and tried to read, but it was no use. He put the book away and started working a puzzle in a newspaper, but that too was beyond him.

His moodiness was interrupted by a smartly dressed woman who carried a camera.

"Good morning!" she said cheerily. "I'm Miss Miller."

"What can I do for you, Miss Miller?" Philip asked.

"I'm from *Life* magazine," she announced, "and we would like very much to do an article about you."

"Oh really now!" Philip protested. "I admit I'm a good physician, but this Miracle Man business is getting a little bit out of common sense, don't you think?"

"Our readers don't think so, doctor," she replied. "We've had more requests to run some pictures of you than any other topic."

"It looks as though I'm degenerating from a physician to a phenomenon, doesn't it?"

"Not exactly a spectacle, Doctor. More of a national institution," Miss Miller replied.

"All right, Miss Miller, you win," Philip admitted. "Where would you like to start?"

"I thought I would start with some pictures of the Clinic, if it would be possible?"

DURING the ensuing hour, Philip forgot his misgivings and regained some of his usual good humor while showing Miss Miller the Clinic. She was tactful and witty, and as they passed a nurse, Philip overheard the remark, "Look! Dr. Morrison's smiling! That woman must be good medicine."

Then Philip remembered his unexplainable depression. Even as he talked to Miss Miller he puzzled about it further. Finally, he dismissed the idea.

As they were completing their tour of the nearly complete new wing, the annunciator system summoned Philip. He excused himself and stepped to the

nearest instrument.

"Morrison speaking," he said crisply. "What is it?"

"Emergency, Doctor. He's in your examining room."

"What does it look like, Clara?"

"I think it's a ruptured appendix, Doctor. The laboratory is making a blood count now."

"I'll be right down," Philip replied, switching off the control button.

"May I come too?" Miss Miller interjected eagerly.

"Why, yes," Philip replied. "You'll have to wait in my office while I make the examination, though."

When Philip reached the examining room he found a man unconscious on the table. An interne was taking his pulse. As Philip completed his examination, Clara entered with the lab report and he studied it for a moment.

"White count thirty-five thousand," he mumbled. "I'm afraid it's ruptured. Take him to surgery at once."

As the man was trundled down the hall, Philip had a moment alone.

"Well Dr. Spelvin," he whispered, "you heard my diagnosis. What do you think?"

"Just what I would have said," The Voice replied.

"Is that all?" Philip asked.

"That's all," The Voice answered.

Philip felt reassured as he walked down the hall toward the surgery. Suddenly, he felt a light touch on his sleeve and turned to see Miss Miller.

"You said I could go along," she reminded him.

"Oh really!" Philip exclaimed. "I didn't mean—" He paused and shrugged his shoulders. "It's up to you, Miss Miller. This is apt to be a little messy though."

"That's all right," she smiled. "I'm going to be watching you anyway."

"Okay," Philip replied, "but don't

say I didn't warn you. You go right through that door over there. That's the amphitheater and you can watch from there."

A MOMENT later, Philip was scrubbing his hands vigorously. He hadn't stopped to change clothes. He dropped the brush and ran the pointed end of an orange stick under his already immaculate nails. The anesthesiologist was beginning induction of anesthesia. Philip watched the patient carefully through the open door of the scrub room. His breathing was deep and even. Philip's foot found the treadle of the alcohol dispenser. A warm stream of alcohol poured into his cupped hands and turned cold as he rubbed it over the palms and backs.

The nurse entered holding a sterile gown. Swiftly, Philip slipped his arms in while the nurse gingerly tied the strings. Another sprinkled talcum on his hands. Philip rubbed it in, watching the patient carefully all the while. A masked nurse held out Philip's gloves as he entered the surgery. With a deft, practiced motion, Philip slid his hands into the rubber gloves and flexed his fingers several times. He wasn't sure, but the patient's respiration didn't look as it should.

As he bent over the patient, another nurse fastened a mask over his face. Philip's finger touched the patient's skin delicately. It was as taut as a drum.

"This is going to be close," he thought.

As he made an incision, he heard a slight moan from the gallery. His eyes darted up. Miss Miller was gripping the rail in front of her seat and her face was ashen.

"She'll get over it in a minute," one of the internes mumbled. "I was that way too the first time."

To Philip, none of these words meant

anything. Except for himself, the anesthesiologist and the instrument nurse, no one existed. Now that he was working, the nervousness, the tension was gone. Although his fingers seemed to fly like parts of a high speed machine, he was working carefully, accurately. As the work progressed, the mumbled voices of the internes and nurses died and the silence was absolute except for an occasional "sponge" or "haemostat."

Miss Miller, was seated now, but her hands still clutched the rail in front of her. Hardened as she was to scenes of death and destruction, watching this battle between men and the spectre of death was almost unbearable. Each time the ratchets on an instrument clicked, she winced as though they had been applied to her own body. She imagined the sound of the ventilating fan to be the voice of Death, humming idly, watching his chance to take over.

She kept her eyes on Philip, watching his swift hands, trying hard not to see that on which the hands worked. Once she thought she was going to faint, but a shifting white figure obscured the field of the operation in time. Her lips moved silently mouthing, "Miller, you're a fool! Brace up!! Don't make an ass out of yourself!"

The patient's breathing was irregular now and the anesthesiologist's face bore a worried look.

Philip unconsciously murmured, "Cheyne Stoke's breathing! That's bad."

Philip was closing up now. The stitching instrument was moving almost too fast to follow with the human eye. Occasionally, he glanced at the clock.

"Fifty-one minutes! That's long! Much too long."

He was almost finished. Suddenly, his hands paused as something caught his eye. Below the lobe of the patient's left ear was a widening spot of red.

Even as he watched, another drop gathered on the ear and joined the ever widening spot. The cold hand of horror closed around his heart. The tiny nick on the patient's ear where the laboratory sample had been taken was still bleeding! The patient was a haemophiliac, a bleeder!

PHILIP shouted and nurses scurried.

A syringe was placed in Philip's hands filled with a coagulant. Through the doorway, a nurse and interne were bringing a plasma infusion outfit. Even as Philip prepared to plunge the needle home, the man on the table gave a long shuddering breath and breathed no more.

Swiftly, Philip felt for the carotid artery but there was no pulse. He looked like an old man as he wearily laid the syringe on the instrument table, unused.

The internes filed out of surgery with shocked, unbelieving looks on their faces. Most of them had been convinced that Philip couldn't lose a case.

Philip felt an arm thrown around his shoulder and a voice spoke softly in his ear.

"Buck up, Philip! He didn't have a Chinaman's chance. There's a limit to what even you can do."

Philip looked into Dr. Atherton's face. The older man was smiling.

"Thanks Stuart," he sighed. "I'm afraid my luck had to run out sometime."

"You're taking this too much to heart, Philip," Atherton said. "I tell you what you can do! Come on down to my office when you're finished here. I've got a bottle of genuine Napoleon brandy my nephew gave me for Christmas. I think you could use a little!"

"No, thanks just the same," Philip declined. "I've only had two drinks in my life and both times I felt worse

afterward than I did before."

"All right," Atherton smiled. "Suppose I have them send you a pot of coffee from the kitchen?"

"I think I could use it," Philip said. "I'm very tired."

CHAPTER IV

BACK in his office, Philip sipped his coffee and looked out of his window. The office nurse had made out the death certificate and left it on his desk. As Philip affixed his signature, the door opened and Miss Miller came in, camera slung over her shoulder.

"I want to thank you again, Dr. Morrison," she said. "You were very kind to show me around."

"That's perfectly all right, Miss Miller," Philip replied. "I only wish you had come a day sooner. Now it looks as though you'll have to change that article a little bit."

Miss Miller opened the door again. "When I write the article, I'm going to pretend I did come a day earlier," she said softly. "You're a legend that a lot of unfortunate people want to believe in with all their hearts. I'm not going to destroy that legend because—" she paused and bit her lip "—because I believe in it too. Goodbye, Dr. Morrison."

As the door closed behind her, Philip dropped his head on his arms. Some minutes later, he straightened up and looked at the ceiling.

"Are you here, George?" he asked.

"I'm here," The Voice replied.

Why did you let that man die?"

"Because it's better for you and the world that he not live," The Voice said.

"Then you *did* deliberately let him die?"

"Yes," The Voice admitted, "I did."

"You said you'd help me," Philip accused, "yet you misled me. You let

me think that everything would be all right. I don't say that I *could* have saved him, but if I hadn't trusted you, depended on you, maybe I would have made tests before I operated.

The invisible George's reply was anguished. "I'm sorry, Philip. Sorry for you, but believe me, I couldn't do anything else! He had to die! He wasn't truly a man! He was a thing! An evil creature! If he had been conscious, he would never have come to you in the first place"

"What do you mean, he wasn't human?" Philip demanded. "Don't you think I can see or feel? He was as human as I am!"

"Philip, believe me," George Spelvin replied, "he was not human! There are creatures inhabiting the earth that are enemies of all humanity. If you believe that I exist, you must believe that they exist!"

"Even granting that you're right," Philip said wearily, "it makes no difference. I took an oath to save lives when I became a physician and a life is a life, be it human or otherwise. I won't try to say whether you're right or wrong, George. All I know is that you've let me down. I can't trust you any more, I can't depend on you."

"Do you mean you don't want me to help you any more?" George asked.

"I'm afraid not," Philip sighed. "Heavens knows I don't want it this way, but I have no choice. Hereafter, I'll have to depend entirely on my own judgment. I can't afford to take any more chances."

"Very well, Philip," George replied, "but if you ever change your mind or need me, just call. I'll be there."

Philip didn't answer but dropped his head on his arms again.

IT WAS late in the afternoon when he rose from his desk and put on his

hat and coat. At the door he paused and spoke to his office nurse.

"I'm going now, Clara. Take care of things for me, will you? If there are any calls, I'll be at home."

Clara was slightly surprised. "Why—yes, doctor, I will. Aren't you feeling well?"

"I'm all right. I'm just a little tired, that's all."

The cool air blowing in through the window of his car helped to clear the cobwebs out of his brain. When Philip dispassionately looked at the problem, his personal infallibility seemed just a little ridiculous. As the photographer from *Life* had intimated, "it was a beautiful legend," while it lasted.

Kit was sitting on the porch steps when Philip drew up in front of the house. At the sight of her, his heart felt heavy.

"What will I tell Kit?" he thought. He wanted desperately to talk to some one, but who besides Kit could he talk to.

"I won't tell her anything," he decided. "I just can't have her worried about me!"

As Philip came up the walk, his face was stern. "See here, young lady! What are you doing outside without a coat?"

"Oh Philip, it's not cold! It's the first nice day we've had and I just couldn't stay inside. Besides, Dr. Potter said fresh air was good for me."

"I suppose if he said that lots of water was good for you, you'd gone for a swim in the lake!"

They laughed, then Kit looked at him sharply.

"Darling, you look tired. Did you have a hard day?"

"No more so than usual, honey." Philip tried to change the subject. "By the way, sweetheart, did the man come to look over the spare room? If we're going to make it over into a nursery,

we haven't got too much time!"

Kit's eyes were puzzled. "No he didn't come." She paused. "What's wrong Philip?" she asked simply.

Philip shrugged his shoulders. "I *never* have been able to keep anything from you! Let's go inside."

He helped her up the stairs and they walked into the house. Inside, Philip sank into his favorite armchair. Kit settled herself on the end of the couch, one foot tucked under her.

"Did something happen at the Clinic?" Kit asked.

Philip sighed. "I lost my first case, today."

"Oh no! Oh sweetheart, I'm so sorry! But it happens to every doctor sometimes. Some cases are just hopeless!"

"I know," he replied. "This one was almost hopeless, but if I had been on my toes, I could have saved him!"

"But darling, you can't expect to save all those hopeless cases!"

"I know I can't save them all, Kit, but this was only an appendectomy. It was a tough one, true, but I think I could have saved him if hadn't been misled!"

"There!" she said triumphantly. "I knew it wasn't your fault! If someone misled you darling, how can you blame yourself?"

"But no one did mislead me? That is— oh well, let it go!"

"That isn't reasonable, Philip! First you say you were misled and now you say no one misled you! What do you mean?"

"Kit, you wouldn't believe me if I told you! You'd think I was crazy!"

"Philip, you're not making sense! Start at the beginning and tell me the whole thing," Kit commanded.

AGAIN Philip shrugged his shoulders, settled deeper in his chair and

began to talk. His narrative took them back to a little bit of coral jutting out in the huge Pacific ocean. Omitting no details, he brought the story up to the present. When he was finished, Kit was silent.

"You see," Philip said, "I knew you wouldn't believe it. That's why I haven't told you before!"

Kit's face was solemn as she got up. "I believe you, darling," she replied, "only—it seems so unreal, so strange. Let's go out in the kitchen. We can talk about it while I get dinner."

Out in the kitchen, Kit busied herself preparing dinner. Philip sat on a chair beside the stove watching her and answering her questions apathetically. Kit set the last dish on the table and then looked squarely at Philip.

"If you ask me, I think you're better off without The Voice! You're a good doctor, better than most, and you don't need The Voice! Let's forget all about it and have a nice supper!"

Philip smiled wanly. "Maybe you're right, honey."

About half-way through the meal, Philip laid down his fork.

"Darling, I'm convinced you're right! When you look at the whole thing logically, The Voice must have some ulterior, maybe sinister motive in helping me."

"What for instance?" Kit asked.

Philip weighed his words before replying. "Well, it's hard to say. Maybe something melodramatic like acquiring my soul," Philip laughed.

Kit shuddered slightly. "That's an awful thing to say, Philip!"

"Oh Kit! You don't believe for a minute that anything like that could happen, do you?"

"I wouldn't have believed about The Voice if I hadn't heard it from you! I'm beginning to think that anything is possible!"

Philip bit his lip momentarily, then resumed his dinner in silence.

CHAPTER V

THE next day at the hospital, Philip's associates watched him closely, he thought. Fortunately, there was nothing too difficult to be done and what work there was, Philip had already carefully outlined in his mind several days previously. As the day wore on his calm, easy manner reasserted itself. His confidence in himself was restored. Atherton spoke to him several times in his bluff hearty manner and each time, Philip felt reassured.

That night, he reported his victory to Kit.

"Things went just like clockwork!" he exclaimed. "I didn't have a bit of trouble all day."

"See! What did I tell you?" Kit smiled.

"In fact, Mrs. Morrison," Philip continued, "I think I'll take you out to dinner tonight, just to celebrate."

"Why Dr. Morrison!" she replied. "I didn't know you cared!"

Philip returned that night in a warm glow of self confidence which lasted and grew during the next day. It wasn't until the day was over that Philip realized he had made no plans for the next day. Until now, his treatments were based entirely on what he and George Spelvin had discussed more than a week previously.

He frowned and then shrugged his shoulders. After all, there wasn't anything too complicated. He'd examine them carefully, then continue the treatments if necessary. He opened the case history files and paused. No, he was too tired tonight. Tomorrow would be soon enough.

The following afternoon at five o'clock, Philip wearily unhooked his

stethoscope from behind his neck.

"Oh Lord!" he groaned. He surveyed the desk in front of him. The pile of untouched records seemed as large as it had been that morning. He pressed the buzzer on his desk. Clara entered almost immediately.

"Yes doctor?" she said in a business-like voice.

"I'm going to knock off for about an hour," Philip said, "then I'll come back and finish this work. I wonder if you'd file away today's records sometime tomorrow. I want to look at them tonight. Just leave them here on my desk when you go."

Clara's eyebrows rose slightly. "But doctor, what about Mrs. Tate? She's been waiting for nearly an hour."

Philip rubbed his chin. "Oh yes," he muttered. "I'd forgotten all about her. You'd better have her come in."

Mrs. Tate required very little attention so Philip was able to have his usual coffee in the dining room with Dr. Atherton. Atherton was reading when Philip sat down across the table from him. He looked up from his book.

"Hmm, you're late today, Philip."

"Yes, I had a little more to do than usual," Philip explained. He picked up the coffee pot from the table. "Would you care for some more, Stuart?"

Atherton glanced at his cup. "Yes, I believe I could use a little."

Atherton frowned as he noticed Philip's hand trembling. He studied Philip's face.

"You look tired, my boy," he said. "Don't you let that staff of yours do any of the work?"

Philip smiled. "Yes, they're busy enough most of the time. I've been trying to bring the case histories up to date."

"We've got two new internes coming next week. You can have them in your department, if you wish," Atherton sug-

gested.

"I could use a little more help," Philip admitted.

"Fine," Atherton replied. "I'll send them over to you as soon as they get here."

The older man rose. "Well, I've got to be running along, Philip. I'll see you tomorrow."

A LITTLE later, Philip returned to his desk. The case histories seemed to have grown since he left them. Resignedly, he set to work. Little by little, the pile shrank. He glanced up at the clock.

"Nine o'clock! I should be finished by eleven," he thought. He removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes. Wearily, he laid his head on his arm.

From somewhere a long way off, a telephone jangled. Philip raised his head with a start and looked at the clock.

"Twelve ten," he muttered groggily. "I must have fallen asleep."

The telephone shrilled again insistently. He picked up the instrument.

"Hello," he said, yawning.

Kit was on the other end. "Darling, I've been worried about you," she said. "Is something wrong?"

"No dear," Philip answered. "I meant to call you earlier but I fell asleep. I've been working on some case histories."

"Sweetheart," Kit said anxiously, "you're too tired! You'd better come home and do them tomorrow."

"Maybe you're right," Philip agreed. "I'll be home right away. Goodbye dear."

"Goodbye."

Philip rose and stretched. He looked back at the desk. The pile seemed as large as ever.

"Oh well," he muttered, "never do today what you can put off until tomor-

row!"

He jammed his hat on disgustedly and left.

The week drew to a close and left Philip with a mountain of work. There seemed no possibility of ever getting it all done. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, he was the first one to arrive and the last one to leave at night.

His work in surgery was going down hill too. Philip overheard an interne saying, "it took Morrison longer than usual, didn't it?" as he left the surgery.

Philip too, noticed his hand shaking. At first, only when he was under stress, but toward the end of the week there was always a slight tremor. Twice, when seconds were precious, he had been unable to make a decision. Both guesses had been right, but Philip was afraid his next guess might be wrong. To him, it was obvious that he was finished. He lived in dread of his first fatal blunder. He was convinced he couldn't go on much longer.

Saturday night, he and Kit had an argument. A moment after it started, Philip could have bitten off his tongue. He pacified her and assured her that tomorrow would be the last day he would work late. He was gratified to see relief in Kit's face. At that instant, he decided he wouldn't tell her what he was going to do.

SUNDAY morning found him again at his office. He had just settled down to work when the door opened and Dr. Atherton entered. Philip looked up.

"Hello Stuart! What brings you here?"

"I want to have a little talk with you," Atherton replied.

"If it's about my work, I know what you're going to say. I'm slipping and I know it."

"I wouldn't say that!" Atherton

protested. "You're the best man there is in your field."

"Your tense is wrong, Stuart. I was the best man in my field."

Atherton shook his head and smiled. "Sometimes, you're as temperamental as an opera singer! I think some rest, though, would do you a world of good. I hate to say it, but right now your face looks like an unmade bed!"

Philip laughed in spite of himself. "Spare me the details. I looked in a mirror this morning. I didn't want to come down but I thought I could finish up this work today."

"Why don't you let it go until tomorrow, boy? Then you'll have more help!"

"To be quite candid, I planned on giving you my resignation tomorrow."

Atherton was shocked. "You don't mean that, Philip! Surely you're joking!"

Philip sighed. "No, I'm in dead earnest. It's the only thing I can do."

"But Philip! Can't you see what a hole you'll be leaving us in?"

Philip Morrison shrugged. "Frankly, I think I'm doing you a favor. There are other and better men for the job."

Atherton looked downcast. "Well, if that's the way you feel Philip. If you've had a better offer—"

"No! That isn't it at all! You don't get what I'm driving at. I mean I'm retiring from practise!"

Atherton was incensed. "That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard in my life! Here you are the most brilliant surgeon in the world, right at the very beginning of your career, and you want to retire!"

Philip groaned. "Stuart don't you see yet that I'm at the end of my career, not the beginning!"

"I don't see anything of the kind!" Atherton replied, his voice rising.

"All right! Have it your way,"

Philip answered, "but I know better!"

Dr. Atherton leaned back in his chair and lit a cigarette before replying. "Philip, if this were anyone else but you, it would be laughable, but since this is you, it's tragic!"

Philip didn't reply and Atherton went on.

"There's nothing too uncommon about a brilliant man deciding he's all washed up just before he becomes a success, but it is rather rare to find one that feels that he is finished after he becomes successful. I'm supposed to be a pretty big name in medicine, but to me, Stuart Atherton is just a big bluff. I think I've made as many mistakes as anyone has, but there's one mistake I haven't made. I don't feel I'm useless just because I don't know all there is to know. You and I both know that you don't know all there is to know, but is that any reason to quit, give up?"

"No that isn't—" Philip began.

"Exactly," Atherton interrupted. "Don't you think that a lot of the fellows that you put back together on the battlefield thought they were all washed up? I know it's different with a professional man, but I know another physician who summed it all up. You never met Lorenz did you?"

"The bloodless surgeon?" Philip asked. "No I haven't."

"Well, I did," Atherton continued. "I studied in Europe, you know. Once I was about ready to give up medicine because I seemed hopelessly dull compared to my fellow students. How Lorenz found out, I don't know, but he approached me and had me come to his office. What he had to say wasn't too clear at the time but I think I know what he meant. I remember his exact words.

"Atherton, you are yet a boy. You have not practised nor have you had a

chance to test yourself. What does it matter to the world if a doctor can recite Sahli's Diagnostic Methods word for word? Given time, a parrot could do that. What does it mean to a patient to know that his doctor was the most brilliant in medical school, if that patient dies? It is not what a man knows, but what he can do! I am not telling you that you are great. I am only saying that you owe it to the world to give yourself a chance. Have the courage to say as Hippocrates once said, I don't know why you are ill, but I'll try to find out."

"What he said, I took to heart. With every patient that came in I said to myself, I don't know what is wrong with you, but I'll try to find out. I kept saying that to myself day after day and all of a sudden, I found people referring to me as the famous Dr. Atherton. At first, it frightened me but then I decided to keep going just the way I had been. You don't think you're great, but why not let the world be the judge of that? I'll make you a proposition. Take a month off. Relax and rest. Enjoy your home. Then come back and work for a while and if you're not satisfied with yourself then, I'll agree to accept your resignation."

Philip was too tired to argue. Again he shrugged his shoulders. "All right, Stuart," he replied. "I think we're just prolonging the inevitable, but we'll do it your way."

"Fine!" Atherton exclaimed. "Now here! Put on your hat and coat and let's go out and have some coffee. Just leave the work right where it is. If there's anything we can't dope out in the next month, we'll call you. From now on you're on your vacation."

He led Philip unresistingly out of his office.

Still Phillip had the feeling that all was not quite right.

CHAPTER VI

WHILE Philip and Dr. Atherton were together, Philip was much more cheerful but after Atherton had gone, Philip sat in the restaurant, slowly slipping back into his depression. He went for a walk in the park but it didn't help. He found too much time to think. He wanted to go home but he didn't know what to say to Kit. How could he possibly explain. Now above all, he must do everything to keep her from worrying.

At noon, Philip stopped and had lunch at the same restaurant. He decided he wouldn't tell Kit tonight. Tomorrow would be time enough and he knew it would be much better to talk to her when he, himself was feeling more cheerful. That morning he had told Kit he would be home about five so he would wait and arrive home about then. That way, she wouldn't ask any questions.

Idly his eyes strayed over the newspaper lying next to him. It was opened to the theater ads.

"That's an idea," Philip thought. I'll go to a show. It'll kill time and take my mind off of things."

He selected one at random. At the door he paid his check and then strode out into the warm, spring air. In the doorway a man remarked, "Looks like we're going to have good weather from now on."

Philip nodded.

"Say!" the man said, suddenly. "Ain't you Miracle Man—I mean ah—Dr. Morrison from the Clinic?"

Philip admitted that he was.

"That's what I thought. Say doc, I've been having some trouble with my back. I was wondering if you could tell me what to do."

It took Philip some time to convince the man that an examination would

have to be made before he could help him. Eventually, he disengaged himself and went on to the show. The picture was not particularly inspiring but it did distract his mind somewhat. He was rather glad when it was over, though.

All the way home in his car, he carefully rehearsed what he was going to say to Kit in the morning. As he drew to a stop in front of the house, he was puzzled. All the windows were wide open.

"A little late in the day to be airing the house," he thought. "That's strange. Why would she air out the house and leave the front door closed?"

He felt vaguely uneasy and he hurried up the walk not bothering to put the car in the garage. For no reason a sense of dread crept over him. Inside the door, he paused and listened. The house was silent.

"Kit!" he called. "Where are you?"

There was no answer.

"Maybe she's asleep," he thought.

He hurried up the stairs to the bedroom. It was empty. The bed was made. Frantically, he dashed downstairs and went through the house like a whirlwind. Kit was gone!

"Kit! Kit, where are you?"

He turned and was on the point of dashing out the door when the phone rang. Impatiently, he snatched up the receiver.

"Hello!"

"One moment please."

Philip recognized the voice of the switchboard operator at the Clinic. He bit his lip and waited.

"Hello Philip! Is that you?"

"Yes Stuart. What is it?"

"Kit's over here. She had a fall. It looks pretty bad. Get over here right away."

"Where's Dr. Potter?" Philip asked.

"He's in Ogden. We're trying to get

hold of him now."

"Oh my God!" Philip groaned. "I'll be right over!"

HE SLAMMED the receiver back on its hook and tore out the door. He leaped into his car and slewed around in the middle of the block. He raced through the stop sign on the corner, the car heeling dangerously as it took the turn. Grimly, Philip's hands gripped the wheel. His foot pressed the accelerator to the floor. The speedometer climbed up to sixty, sixty-five, seventy. He jumped slightly in his seat as he heard the low moan of a siren beside him. The motor cycle policeman glanced briefly at the insignia on his license plates and yelled, "Emergency doc?"

Philip nodded his head vigorously and screamed. "Atherton Clinic!"

The policeman nodded preemptorily and snapped on the red light on the front of his motor cycle. He swung in front of Philip's car and his siren began a long, keening wail. On the way, two more motor cycles joined the procession and added their mournful voices to the clamor. In spite of the speed, it seemed to Philip that it took twice as long to reach the Clinic as usual.

At last, they arrived and slid into the ambulance driveway with a squealing of tires, the sirens on the motorcycles dying away into low mournful groans.

A nurse held the door open as Philip dashed through. He ran down the hall and burst into Atherton's office.

"Stuart! How—"

"Quiet!" Atherton commanded. "Ogden is calling."

Dr. Atherton listened intently to the phone for a moment then said, "Hello. Dr. Potter? This is Stuart Atherton. Mrs. Morrison had a bad fall." He paused listening, then said, "Yes, it did. She's in surgery now." Another pause.

"Yes, we've done that already. Yes. Yes, he's here. I'll let you talk to him."

Atherton passed the phone to Philip.

"Hello Philip!"

"Yes Ezra."

"Listen! There isn't much time for a lot of talking. I've only got a general idea of Kit's condition, but I want you and Atherton to go ahead and do what you think you should. I'll get there as quickly as I can but don't, for the love of God, wait for me!"

"But Ezra," Philip protested, "I haven't done any O.B. work for years!"

"That doesn't matter!" Ezra retorted. "You know the case! I wouldn't trust anyone else besides you and Atherton. Now stop this talking and get to work! I'm on my way!"

The receiver clicked in Philip's ear. He hung up the phone appalled. "He wants us to start without him! He'll be here as soon as he can make it!"

"I'm afraid that's what we'll have to do," Atherton answered. "There isn't time for anything else."

Atherton crossed the room and opened a closet. He tossed Philip a set of whites. "Here Philip. You can change into these. The instruments are in the sterilizer so I'll go ahead and get things set up."

The door closed behind him as Philip began stripping off his clothes. Perspiration trickled down his armpits. As he pulled on the white trousers, he looked at the laboratory reports on Kit lying on Atherton's desk and groaned in despair.

"I can't do it! I just can't do it!"

"Oh yes you can!" a voice replied.

Philip glanced around the room. It was empty.

"George! George Spelvin!!"

"I told you I'd be back if you ever needed me," The Voice in Philip's head replied.

"Will you help me? I'll do anything,

anything you ask! Only please help me save Kit!"

"All right, all right!" George answered incisively. "I'll help you but you've got to cooperate with me!"

"I'll do whatever you ask!" Philip said desperately.

"Sit down in that chair!" George commanded. "Lean back and close your eyes!"

"THIS is it!" Philip thought. "He's got me. Only a week ago I laughed at this possibility. If he'll only save Kit! Anything is worth it if he'll only save Kit. I wonder what he's going to do and if it'll hurt very much."

"Stop thinking! Just relax and listen to me," The Voice demanded. Relax. Relax. Let your whole body sag. You're tired. You're very tired. You're sinking onto a black, velvet bed. So soft. Soft. Sleep. Sleep."

On and on The Voice went, monotonously soothing, pacifying. Philip's heart seemed to beat in rhythm to the words. Slower and slower, his mind sank down and down into a black funnel, like a dark whirlpool. Then—nothing.

Philip rose from his chair but it wasn't Philip. The face was smooth and impassive. The step and movements decisive. Quickly, the figure of Philip marched to the surgical scrub room. To all outward appearances, it was Philip, the old Philip, but inside it was George Spelvin, M. D., a physician from nowhere.

With the same careful haste that characterized Philip, he scrubbed, dried and slipped into the sterile gown and gloves. He bent and a nurse quickly fitted cap and mask. Brisquely, he walked to the operating table, Atherton looked up and smiled beneath his gauze mask. This was obviously the old Miracle Man Morrison!

The anesthetist nodded his head and George began to work. Even Atherton was surprised. Certainly the technique was unorthodox, but just as certainly skillful, as though it had been practiced hundreds of times. The pseudo Philip's fingers moved almost too rapidly to follow with the eye. The same miraculous ability to foresee what was coming was exhibited, but now seemed more miraculous than ever. An instant before a need was apparent to the others, George Spelvin had already taken care of it. Except for occasional gasps at some radical departure from the orthodox technique, the silence was absolute. Only once did George glance at the double clocks on the wall.

EZRA POTTER entered the room breathlessly, slipping his scrubbed hands into the gloves the nurse offered him. Potter watched the magic fingers of George Spelvin for a moment and smiling shook his head as the nurse offered him the sterile cap and mask. Slowly, Ezra walked to the other end of the room and stood and watched.

Three times thus far a nurse had mopped perspiration from Atherton's brow, but George's remained dry and unfurrowed. Not quite an hour elapsed when Philip's enchanted hands swiftly, delicately laid the tiny body of Philip Jr. on the sterile, cloth-covered table to his right. Without an instant's hesitation the Miracle Man plunged a hypodermic into the indigo-blue infant's chest. There was a whispered comment from the assistants.

"Why that baby's dead! What can he do?"

For a space of minutes that seemed like eternities Philip's famous hands massaged the tiny body. Then swiftly he held it upward in his hands, rocking it slowly, first head downward, then feet downward. Quickly, he returned

the infant to the table and called, "Give the baby oxygen and carbon dioxide."

He turned his back on the infant and immediately began to work with forceps and stitching instruments. Behind him, an interne lowered a hissing mask over the infant's face. The interne's face showed how hopeless he thought his task. An instant later, he paled slightly as he withdrew the mask a little and the baby's tiny chest heaved a shuddering gasp. His fingers almost let the mask slip to the floor.

"He's—he's alive!" the interne croaked.

A whisper of a chuckle ran around the room, then the tenseness returned. George laid down the stitching instrument and turned to the anesthetist.

"Coramine," he muttered.

The anesthetist injected the stimulant and George continued his precise sutures. Seconds later, he lay down the stitching instrument for the last time. He glanced at Kit. Her breathing was deep. She was beginning to stir from the effects of the coramine. He applied a neat dressing and without a word, walked out of the room. He hurried down the hall and into Atherton's office and there slumped into a chair unconscious. George Spelvin was gone and Philip Morrison slept peacefully.

CHAPTER VII

SHORTLY the door opened. Ezra Potter and Stuart Atherton came in.

"So this is where you disappeared to!"

Philip didn't stir. Dr. Potter shook him gently. Philip's eyes opened. He massaged his forehead and cheeks with his hands. For an instant his memory failed him and then—it all flooded back. In the scrub room, the surgery,

the infant's first breath! Philip remembered these, however, not as things he had done but as things he had dreamed or seen in a play.

Suddenly he asked Ezra, "Kit's all right, isn't she? And the baby too?"

"Of course they are! You ought to know more about that than I do!"

"I suppose so," Philip replied hesitantly, "but it all seems rather hazy now."

Atherton broke in. "You must be just about done in, Philip. Why don't you go up and see your wife and then take one of the private rooms. You might as well stay here tonight. You need the rest and you can be near Kit at the same time."

"That's a good idea. I think I will."

Philip rose and started for the door.

"Wait a minute!" Ezra called. "You aren't going upstairs in that getup, are you?"

Philip had forgotten his surgical clothing.

"You go ahead and change here," Atherton said. "Just throw that stuff in the hamper in the corner. We'll go upstairs and stay with Kit."

Foggily, Philip started to change his clothes. Then he heard The Voice within his brain.

"Did you approve of my work?" George asked.

"Approve! It was perfect!"

"Thank you," George Spelvin replied. "Do you suppose we could work together from now on?"

"Work with you? You mean you're not—that is—"

"Positively not! I have no designs on you whatever."

"But—what is your motive?"

"By believing that I was trying to steal your soul you were admitting the existence of being who would do such a thing."

"Why—why I guess so," Philip re-

plied wonderingly.

"Then is it so strange," George Spelvin asked, "that there should exist those whose purpose is to help humanity? We have as much incentive as the 'evil ones.'"

"Then there definitely are 'evil ones' as you put it?"

"Definitely!" George replied. "Some even in human form."

"Then—then that man that died! He was one of those?"

"He was."

"Will I have to let any more die?" Philip questioned.

"I doubt if there will be any more," George answered. "You see, he wouldn't have come to you under any circumstances. He would have sensed my presence. Since he died, I assure you that any others will be sure to stay away from you."

Philip heaved a sigh of relief. "I'm glad. It's hard to lose a case when you don't have to. It doesn't matter what they are. Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"I did," George said, "but you were too prone to believe that I was the one that was evil!"

Philip nodded his head. "Yes, I guess you're right. I don't know how I can ever repay you for what you've done for me, especially in view of the injustices I've done you."

"It's a simple debt to repay. Just go on being a good physician. Pass on what you learn to others and I'll consider the debt more than paid. Now go see Kit and don't worry! She'll be all right."

PHILIP walked up the ramp, his coat slung over his arm. At the head of the ramp he met Ezra and Dr. Atherton.

"Ah, here you are!" said Ezra. "I thought you had gone back to sleep

on us."

Philip grinned sheepishly. "I'm sorry I took so long."

Dr. Potter laughed. "That's all right, Philip." He turned. "Kit's in there. I just gave her a hypo but she'll be awake for a few minutes."

Philip softly entered Kit's room and walked up to the head of the bed. Kit looked at him for a moment.

"Philip dear," she said softly.

A big lump formed in his throat. He clasped her hands in his.

"Ezra says the baby's fine," she said weakly. "Does he look like you?"

Philip shook his head. "He looks like both of us."

He held her hands a few minutes more in silence. Kit's eyelids began to droop.

She sighed. "I'm so glad I married a Miracle Man." Her eyes closed.

Tears trickled down Philip's face. He drew both her hands to his lips, kissed them and covered them with the blanket. Very quietly he left the room.

In the private room next door, Philip sat a long time on the edge of his bed. An old line he had once heard popped into his mind. There are no atheists in fox holes.

"That applies to a lot more than just fox holes," he thought, a half smile on his lips.

There was a knock on the door.

"Come in," Philip called.

Dr. Atherton entered the room. "How do you feel now, Philip?"

"Pretty groggy," Philip admitted. "By the way, would you like to change that agreement of ours a little?"

"I was just going to ask you the same question. You can have the month's vacation if you want it but no resignation! I wouldn't take your resignation now even at the point of a gun!"

"Sounds fair enough," Philip replied.

"There's another thing too," Ather-

ton continued. "Miss Becker, my nurse, kept notes on your work tonight. I wonder if you would mind doing a paper on it for The Journal. I'd be glad to help you with it. The new techniques that you used would be a boon to other physicians."

Philip remembered his conversation with George Spelvin.

"I think I'd like very much to do a thesis on it. I've already promised someone else I would."

"Oh, is that so? Who?"

"Dr. Spelvin," Philip answered.

"Dr. George Spelvin."

Atherton's brow furrowed. "Spelvin? I don't believe I know him. Why don't you have him play a round of golf with us some day?"

"I'll ask him," Philip promised with a wry smile, "but I don't think he'll accept. He doesn't play very well."

"Fine," Atherton grunted. "Well I'd better go now and let you get some rest."

Soon Philip was in bed. He didn't think he would be able to sleep but he was wrong. When Dr. Potter opened the door ten minute later, he smiled.

"My, my! Philip, you are without a doubt the sleepingest man I ever saw!"

Somewhere in the room a silent voice chuckled.

"Indeed he is, Dr. Potter, indeed he is!"

CHAPTER VIII

AT FIFTY years of age, Philip Morrison looked remarkably young. True he was graying at the temples, but his figure was still thin and aesthetic. For ten years he had been without the benefit of the wise council of Stuart Atherton. Philip's practice was more limited now since the younger members of his staff handled the more routine cases. Occasionally though, he

was called upon to perform one of his famous surgical miracles and unfailingly he did.

His name was truly a legend among his colleagues and certainly no medical school was complete without his books. In these medical schools, you had but to open one of these texts and you would invariably find penned in below, his name, Miracle Man.

Philip had yet to give a lecture in a medical school without having the auditorium filled and seats placed in the aisles. Even then there would be some standing.

The team Spelvin and Morrison was indeed a successful one. At first, it had been more Spelvin than Morrison, but now except for a very occasional suggestion, the invisible George Spelvin, M. D., was limited to minor comments, approval or plain conversation.

The Clinic had grown too. Now it stood twenty-four stories high. At the request of Philip, it had been renamed Atherton Memorial Hospital. People going there, however, invariably asked to be taken to Morrison's Clinic. The third floor was devoted to charity alone and a bronze plaque faced the elevator bearing the words, "The facilities of this floor are dedicated to the memory of George Spelvin, M. D."

No one in the hospital knew exactly who George Spelvin, M. D., was, but rumor had it that he had been a colleague and co-worker of Dr. Morrison during the second world war. This floor, like the others, was always filled.

In his spacious offices, Philip looked up from his desk. His secretary entered.

"Yes, Miss Lewis?" Philip asked.

"Dr. Winston is outside and would like to see you."

"Winston?" Philip frowned. "Oh yes! He's that interne that's been doing such good work in the neuro-

psychiatric division! Send him in."

Young Dr. Winston came through the door, nervously.

"Come in Winston. Sit down," Philip invited.

The young man hesitantly complied. Philip waited for him to speak, but Winston seemed to have trouble finding the right words. Philip smiled, trying to put him at his ease.

"What can I do for you, Dr. Winston?" Philip always used the title when speaking to one of his internes.

"Dr. Morrison, I—" he hesitated, then blurted, "I want to resign!"

PHILIP pursed his lips. "Oh? Is that so? Do you, ah—have a better offer?"

"Dr. Morrison, you know there isn't any such thing as a better offer. It's the greatest honor in the world to be allowed to work with you," Winston said in an agonized voice.

"Maybe so," Philip admitted, "but if that's true, why do you want to leave? If you've had some misunderstanding, I'm sure we can straighten it out. We'd like very much to have you complete your internship here rather than somewhere else."

The younger man stared at the floor. "That isn't it at all! I'm not going to practise. I'm going to give up medicine—forever!"

Philip smiled slightly. "This situation has a somewhat familiar ring. May I know why you want to give up your career?"

"I—I'm afraid I can't tell you," Winston muttered.

"Oh come now!" Philip insisted. "I'll have to say something to your medical school. If I don't, they'll think it was something that I did. You wouldn't want to leave me in a spot like that would you?"

Winston bit his lip. "If you must

know, sir," he whispered, "I'm losing my mind! I'm going insane!"

"What!" Philip exclaimed. "What in the world makes you think so?"

"It's no use, sir. I've been studying psycho-pathology all my life, ever since I was a boy, and I couldn't be wrong!" Winston's eyes were wet. "All my life I've wanted to be a psychiatrist and now I can't. How can one lunatic treat another? It's nothing obscure either! I'm just a plain garden variety of paranoid!"

Philip raised one eyebrow. "Oh? Do you have homicidal impulses?"

The boy covered his eyes with his hand. "No, not yet, but I hear voices or rather a voice."

"A voice, eh?" Philip asked. "What does the voice say?"

"That's the only unusual feature," Winston went on, diagnosing his own case. "It talks to me about my patients! It makes suggestions about the treatments!"

"What about these suggestions," Philip asked. "Are they good ones? Are the diagnoses correct?"

"By a coincidence, so far they have been! All of them!" Winston replied.

"Do you ever hear the voice at other times?"

"Only when I consciously try to talk to it."

"Hmm," Philip muttered, "somehow, I have a hunch that you're not insane. Nor do I think you're going insane."

"No sir! Not even you can change my mind," the young man said miserably. "If you're thinking it's my own mind answering me, you're wrong! The voice answers me like another person and I don't know what the answers are going to be. It doesn't even use the same words that I would use!"

PHILIP considered this for a moment then snapped the switch on the com-

municator box.

"Miss Clark?" he asked. "Can you tell me quickly the number of cases that Dr. Winston has handled? Also, how many correct diagnoses he has made and how many of the cases under his personal care have been pronounced complete recoveries?"

There was a short pause. Miss Clark's voice came back metallically. "The records for the last three months show that he has diagnosed thirty-six cases correctly. There were two disagreements with the attending physician's diagnosis, but Dr. Winston proved to be correct. He has handled nine cases personally, six of which were completely cured. The other three are still under treatment. Prognosis in these three cases by the resident psychiatrist is extremely favorable. Shall I look up the records for the preceding three months?"

"Just a moment please," Philip requested. He snapped off the switch and turned to Winston.

"How long has this voice business been going on?" he asked.

"Not quite three months," Winston answered apathetically.

Philip snapped the instrument on again. "That's all I need, Miss Clark. Thank you." Philip grinned broadly at Winston. "My boy, since you were going to resign anyway, you probably have enough time to sit and listen to this story.

Winston looked at him blankly and nodded his head.

"Relax," Philip went on. "Have a cigarette! This may take some time. We have to go all the way back to the start of the second world war."

Quite some time later, Dr. Winston emerged from Philip's office. His shoulders were square now and he looked happy although a little dazed. He shook his head slightly and kept

muttering, "Morrison too! If that isn't the damndest thing I ever heard. Still, I think I'm sane. He certainly is!" He frowned, a determined frown. "I'd better get to work!"

It was rather late that afternoon when Miss Lewis entered Philip's office, a troubled look on her face. She extended a typewritten sheet.

"Dr. Morrison, haven't you made a slight error? According to this, you've appointed Dr. Frederick Winston to fill the vacancy as Assistant Chief of Neuro-Psychiatric Division!"

"I don't think I made a mistake," Philip smiled.

"But—but—" the woman sputtered. "he's only an interne! That's the one you were talking to this morning!"

"That's all right," Philip chuckled. "He completes his internship next week. The appointments don't take effect until the first of next month. That gives him two weeks off. That should be enough don't you think?"

"I—I—suppose so," she responded weakly. She turned and faced him again. "I'm going down to the kitchen, doctor. Would you like me to bring you anything? Some coffee maybe?"

"No thanks, Miss Lewis. I think I'll take the rest of the afternoon off. I'm going out with an old friend, Dr. Spelvin."

"Who!" Miss Lewis gasped.

"Dr. George Spelvin," Philip replied.

"Oh—ah—of course." Miss Lewis went through the door a trifle unsteadily.

When Philip passed her a few minutes later, she had a thermometer tucked in one corner of her mouth. With her left hand, she was taking her own pulse so diligently that she didn't even see Philip as he went out the door. She only absently noted the loud burst of laughter that drifted in through the open window that faced the street.

I, JOHN COTTER

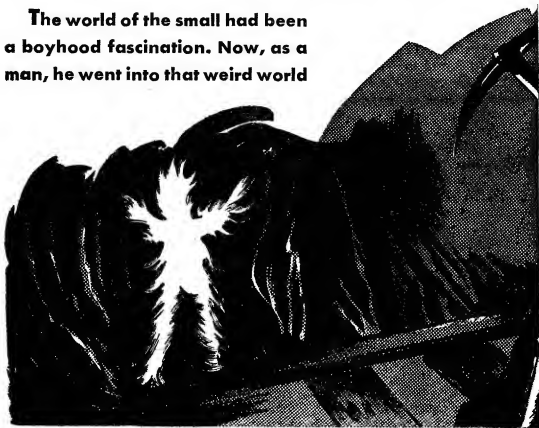
by MILLEN COOKE

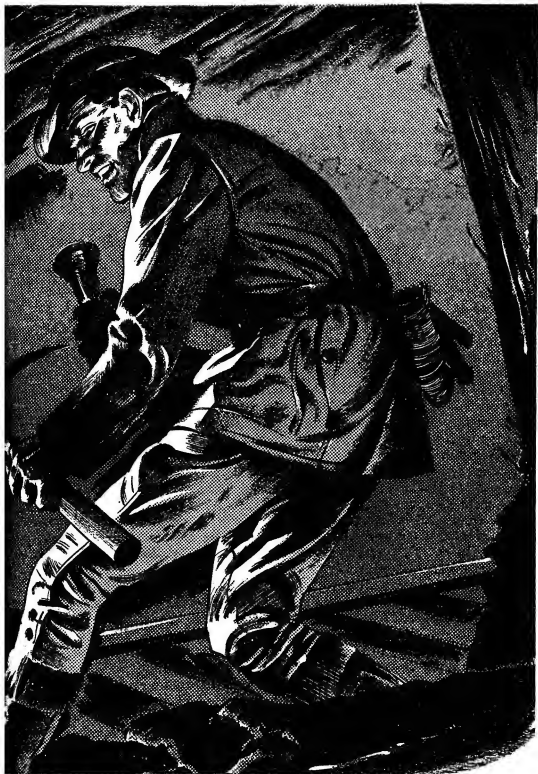
THE story of my strange experiences begins on a Christmas morning when I was ten and a half years old. Among the contents of a bulging Christmas stocking I found a pocket magnifier. There were three neat and shiny lenses that folded into a hard black case that was marked on the sides with crossed lines, like the body of a fish. But it was far more wonderful than any fish. Under its lenses things grew. Things so tiny they were nothing more than a blur to the eye became very clear and near, and revealed their mysteries. Every familiar object

became suddenly unfamiliar, offering a limitless field of discovery and a knowledge of life that it was worse than death to do without.

I spent that entire day going from room to room in the house, examining the minute details of everything I had accepted as comfortably ordinary. Now nothing was usual, or ordinary, or even comfortable to have about until it had been seen again with these new magic "eyes." All the other gifts lay neglected and ignored, much to the disgust and bewilderment of those doting relatives who had bestowed them upon me with

The world of the small had been a boyhood fascination. Now, as a man, he went into that weird world





There in the darkness a tiny flame danced for a moment . . .

so much affectionate concern.

The next day and the day following were spent in the same rambling survey of the house and its contents. My parents became alarmed at this intense concentration upon the world of small, and threatened to take away the magnifier if I continued to do nothing but prowl about with it. At this point my grandfather intervened. Instead of forbidding me the glorious occupation, he began to teach me some of the possibilities of my treasure.

Together we explored not only the house and its contents, but ranged the garden—and the world—as well. The old man sent away to far-off places for specimens and strange substances for me to look at. We made a pact, providing that the collection would be constantly enlarged as long as I should spend no more than two hours each day examining things. Unfamiliar knowledge, Grandfather insisted, must be absorbed as food is, regularly, but in digestible quantities.

On my twelfth birthday he gave me a real microscope. I learned very readily how to prepare slides for it, and as my researches progressed, my interest shifted more and more away from the organic world. I lost interest in the myriad lives below the sensitivity level of the human eye. The states and compounds of metals and other minerals absorbed an increasing amount of my time, and occupied a growing space in my library of slides and notes. By the time I was twenty all my organic specimens had been discarded in favor of literally thousands of examples of the so-called lifeless materials, in their pure state and in combination with one another.

At the age of twenty-two I went to work for a mining company, where my knowledge of minerals and exceptional competence with a microscope com-

bined to furnish me with an excellent livelihood. At the same time, it left me comparatively free to pursue my own investigations, and I worked night and day, completely absorbed in the world of little things.

Thus my life proceeded for some years, during which I lived very happily at the mines, spending most of my time more alone than in company. The other men at the mine knew me for a quiet man, something of a "nut," but "all right." For me, it was a placid, and on the whole peaceful, existence. I wished for nothing that I did not have or could not obtain.

MY BIRTHDAY falls on July twenty-ninth. When it came along last year, I declared a private holiday for myself, locked up my microscope, packed a lunch and set out for a certain working about five miles from the main camp. This was no sudden reversal of my character, nor was it any abandonment of my favorite pursuits. It was to be a typical "postman's holiday."

The object of my journey was to obtain a sample of ore from the depths of a newly opened shaft. Curious tales were being told in the camps about that shaft and its contents. Very curious tales. There was something in it that was different. Something neither ordinary nor comfortable, for the stories told by the men who had gone into the hole had grown out of all proportion to common sense. They spoke, for one thing, of glowing veins of ore. Others told of lights that moved inside the rocks. Some spoke of the unnatural heaviness of the ore, and when they did, there were as many men to contradict them, saying the ores became feather-light, seemed to be of no known substance, and then broke to powder at the slightest touch.

All these things were obviously the

weird and wonderful imaginations of adventurous (and monotony-weary) minds. Nevertheless, I have always believed that all rumor, however wild, has some natural foundation in fact, and I hoped to discover for myself the peculiarity that had given rise to those fantastic reports. Somewhere in that shaft, if my theory held good, there was something odd, something out of the usual, something not to be found in other mines. In reporting it, the men had simply let their fancies embroider what was probably only an interesting detail.

However, for many years my life had been made up of interesting details. As I trudged along through the increasing heat of that late July morning, I speculated upon the various possibilities. Radioactivity of some sort? Phosphorescence? Improbable, but not altogether impossible. There was, I knew, galena in the hole, and that meant lead, and lead meant, to me, a variety of possible events not acceptable to other scientific minds. Events that verged upon Alchemy and the ancient, forbidden knowledge of an older time. There was room in my world for these things, for to me the minerals, although they do not breathe, and move only slowly and under strange conditions, have life. And I have always loved that life.

All that lay, however, in the world of my belief. From what I knew, the phenomena reported by the men could not reasonably be due to any such condition. The reports were far too spectacular to be true at all. But why did my mind return again and again to those wild tales as though they were true in substance as well as inspiration? It was, from a practical point of view, most unreasonable. Possibly the unaccustomed exertion of climbing a mountain was proving too tiring.

I sat down in the partial shade of a large boulder and ate one of the oranges from my knapsack. As I peeled the fruit, I tossed the bits of rind down the hillside past my feet. There was a steep slope on the shaded side of the boulder, and I watched idly as the pieces of golden peeling tumbled down the sand screes, starting miniature avalanches as they went. Suddenly I was amazed to see a faint trail of light flicker along one of the little slides. It disappeared almost instantly, but I was certain I had seen it. The sand had been skidding down through the shadow of the rock behind the rolling chunk of orange skin. The little light had flickered along behind it—slower than lightning, and a little quicker than a snake would move. And it had disappeared before it quite reached the shadow's edge.

INTRIGUED, and a little apprehensive, I picked up a small shard of stone and rolled it carefully along the slope where I thought I had seen the light. It clattered down into the brush below, followed by quite a large sand-avalanche. No light appeared. Disappointed, and again beginning to believe I had experienced an hallucination, I tried again. Still nothing. Then, reasoning that the orange peel had brought out the light in the first instance, I ripped off a largish chunk of it, folded it together so it would roll better, and started it down the hill.

Immediately, the light leapt out of the sand behind it and followed it down the slope, leaping and twisting along, half in and half out of the sliding sand.

Filled with sudden excitement and a dreadful delight, I slapped my hand down hard into the light, going a little ahead of it to make sure I would hit it at all. I did. It spread out all around the edges of my hand, and welled over

it, curling, glowing feebly in the shadow, like a faintly luminous mist, colorless—and unutterably cold!

Then, as suddenly as it had come, it disappeared. It did not melt or fade away. It vanished all at once. It was there, lapping about my hand, cold, terrible, and frightening—and it was gone, leaving behind it a great numbness that crept along my arm, spreading like a sick chill of dissolution throughout my whole trembling body.

I leaned back against the boulder and chafed my hand and arm to get the blood going again. I was shaking all over, like a man with an ague. I felt, dully, that I had been rudely awakened from some wild nightmare of walking along an unfamiliar mountain trail, where I had abruptly come to a brink of an awful and unsuspected precipice. I knew, at the same time, that I had not been dreaming. My mind raced desperately trying to put together brain impressions from the past that would resemble and account for the experience of the moment before—and I knew that there was no solution for it there. My whole being was convulsed in terrible revolt against this thing I had uncovered. I wanted to flee down the hillside, but the panic I felt was not sufficiently strong to force my shuddering muscles to lift the aching body of which they were a part. They, too, were frightened, in their own blind way, and could not move except to try to shake away this coldness I had forced upon them.

AFTER a little while I crept out into the sunlight and lay there prone upon the warm earth until the welcome heat of the sun penetrated into the marrow of my bones, and I felt well and one again. As my body grew warmer and its responses became more normal, the fear left me. I began to analyze

my sensations. I realized that the rest of the fear that had seized me had been the perception of all my bodily components as separate, and antagonistic toward one another. My bones had revolted against the muscles that moved them. Skin and organs warred with one another. From one being, I was in the process of becoming many, and in that operation, mind and emotion were being driven apart. I had been disintegrating, as though from within myself—and the light, or something in the light, had been responsible for it.

Well, sunlight was certainly the cure. In less than an hour I felt completely normal again, and I could not restrain my curiosity. More than ever, I wanted to see that mine. It was scarcely half a mile further up the mountain, so I slung my knapsack over my shoulder and resumed my climb.

About two o'clock in the afternoon I reached the working. I had eaten nothing but the orange since early morning, but in my excitement I forgot to be hungry. One desire motivated my every action: I must solve the tantalizing mystery of the strange cold light.

The digging was a level tunnel run straight into the mountainside. It was furnished with a narrow track and small push-car. No other equipment had been left there, since the main purpose of the shaft had been to locate the upper portion of a vein. So when I arrived the tunnel was deserted, and it looked very narrow and very dark as I stood peering into it. For a moment I felt a touch of the fear that had swept over me when I had put my hand in the light.

Curiosity, however, is greater than fear. I shook off my apprehension and walked into the tunnel. My flashlight cut a smaller tunnel of light within the heavy darkness, and as I advanced, I

became increasingly confident. Everything was as it should be. The shaft was bare and dry. I took mental note of the formation as I penetrated farther into the mountainside. It did not differ materially from that farther down. Everything was, indeed, as it should be.

Reassured, I switched off the flashlight as I waited. The tunnel entrance was a patch of light three hundred feet behind me. Ahead, not ten feet away, was the end of the tunnel. Many minutes passed before I realized fully what I was doing. What in the world was I waiting for? Was it possible that I actually credited those wild stories, after all? What had come over me to make me stand perfectly still in the dark end of a tunnel and wait for an indefinite length of time for an equally indefinite something—for I had not been thinking of the light, or of anything else, for that matter. It was simply an empty waiting . . .

Embarrassment made me glad nobody was with me. Chuckling at my own foolishness, I turned back toward the entrance, switching on the flashlight as I moved.

I CAUGHT a glimpse of it then, out of the corner of my eye. Light. Light in the dark end of the tunnel. Light, that moved and twisted just at the edge of the beam cast by the flash. Instantly, I snapped off the flashlight. Nothing. Again I waited, this time knowingly deliberately and willingly I waited, staring at the blank expanse of darkness where I had seen the fleeting trail of brilliance.

What could I do to bring it back again?

A great yearning filled my whole being. If only I might see again that luminous motion! There was no memory of the coldness, or of the fear, or of the

numbing pain of a disintegrating organism. In that instant there was only the yearning, the unconquerable longing to look again upon something remembered as an incredible loveliness.

After a while I remembered the oranges. Outside, it had followed the orange peel down the slope. There the light had spread over my hand. The thought of it brought back a faint memory of all that had happened, and I was unwilling to undergo that torment a second time. So I peeled an orange and tossed the bits of rind against the tunnel wall.

Nothing happened.

I peeled another, and still another, with no result whatever. When the oranges were all gone, I tried the other food I had brought with me. With every new thing I tried, my wild desire to see the light again mounted and increased within me until, my foodstuff exhausted, I rushed to the wall and passionately pressed my hands against the rock. Finally I beat my hands against the rough tunnel wall until they were raw and bleeding, reddening the dark rocks about the spot where the light had disappeared.

But nothing at all happened. Exhausted, I sat down upon the floor of the tunnel, and stared at the blank darkness, nursing my bleeding hands. Slowly my senses returned. My mind took up its normal pattern of thought and I marveled at my own behavior. Apparently the light aroused in me the most elemental passions. Fear, desire, all raw emotion, unbidden by and unattached to any mental influence. Apparently it pulled mind and feeling apart, leaving only that intense desire for—or fear of—the elusive light.

Or had I got too much sun coming up the mountain? Was that the explanation? Was all this the product of some wild delirium induced by over-exertion,

bright light, and July heat? The doctor, I decided, could tell me that when I got back to camp. I resolved to submit to a thorough examination the minute I got home!

Pulling myself to my feet, this time with definite effort, I turned on the flashlight once more and started toward the tunnel entrance. Had I walked out of the tunnel, then, at that moment, nothing more might have happened to set the story of John Cotter apart from the stories of thousands of other men who have looked for a moment beyond the narrow and confining pattern of space and time through which mankind pursues his happiness.

But I, John Cotter, did not walk out of the tunnel. I turned back. Moved by a strange and fateful curiosity—and by who knows what other influences beyond myself—I took my hammer and knocked off a jutting chunk of dark crystalline ore from the area where I had seen the light. It was a smallish piece, no bigger than my fist, showing the satiny cubes of galena and little else. I thrust it into my knapsack and left the tunnel, trudged down the hill and went straight to the doctor's office.

IT WAS late in the day, by that time, and the doctor was not in. I decided to find something to eat before hunting up the doctor at his home, and another unbreakable link was forged in the chain of my extraordinary circumstances.

I felt a great deal better after I had eaten. The visit to the doctor, I decided, could wait until morning. Instead of going to his house, therefore, I went home, and took the sample of rocky ore out of my knapsack. It possessed, I discovered, a most unreasonable and powerful fascination, which drew my attention in spite of every effort I could make to think of other

things. I found myself unable to look at anything else in the room. Yes, apparently, there was nothing at all uncommon or out of the ordinary about that bit of mineral. It looked exactly like hundreds of similar chunks I had seen. But somehow, something about this chunk was different.

It was as though—and my mind rejected this thought with all its powers, frantically piling up evidence, against its possibility—it was as though the mineral had desires of its own. After a while, and against my own judgment, I became convinced of that fact. It *did* have desires. It *did* want something, that dark stuff, and out of it poured great waves of longing and of need.

Or was I simply translating my own desires to the object of them? My mind suggested this. Was it I who desired something from the stone? I resolved to see!

Methodically I began to break up the specimen.

Something possessed me then, as it had in the tunnel, and on the mountainside. Something possessed me, and moved my hands and feelings, overruled my mind, and I began to do, not what I wanted to do, but whatever the "something" in the stone would have me do.

First I broke the chunk in two pieces, the larger of which I threw away. Then, from the broken edge of the smaller piece, with great care and infinite patience, I extracted one tiny, perfectly cubical crystal. When I had succeeded in getting it safely detached from its neighbors, an overpowering sensation of great joy surged through my whole consciousness, and I shouted aloud for sheer relief and exultation.

This crystal I prized so highly and so without reason was less than one sixteenth of an inch in height, and it was

with extreme caution that I carried it carefully to my microscope. I placed it gingerly upon a glass slide, and adjusted stage and lamps and lenses. As I maneuvered the little crystal into full view, I said to myself, "Now you shall see an absolutely perfect crystal of galena." Slowly as I turned the fine adjustment, the crystal's smooth rectangular planes came sharply into focus. I gasped in astonishment, so sheer, so smooth and featureless were the sides of this miniature cube. (Even at 200x they show not a trace of line or scratches.) Patiently I examined all six sides of the crystal. No disfiguring pit marred their beautiful surfaces. Every angle was exact and perfect.

But it was the color that impressed me most of all. Under the microscope (and to the naked eye), galena is softly metallic, like oxidized silver rubbed to a satin-soft lustre. This crystal was colored like the most deeply violet amethyst imaginable. Nowhere did it show the slightest trace of metallic lustre. Amethystine and mysterious it lay, faintly translucent at the upper angles, shading from a rich spectrum color to a dark opacity that was almost black.

It was, however, no amethyst. It was a perfect cube.

I SET the analyzer over the eyepiece of my microscope, and turned the prism slowly around. Immediately a symphony of rainbows leapt out of the depths of the violet cube. Bewildered and very much confused I watched the colors shift and change. Was this after all some strange freak of quartz? What did I have there? I forced my tired brain to seek an answer in its wide knowledge, but my mind could not identify this stranger from any of its experience.

I continued to rotate the analyzer, and at the instant the Nichols crossed

and the field went dark, I saw . . . IT, and I nearly went mad with excitement. The violet cube was almost invisible against the darkened field, but there, in the heart of the crystal, leaping, flickering, coiling like a living thing, lay a tiny replica of the flame. It moved about inside the cube, a lovely miniature of the light that had enveloped my hand. Up, down, around, within the diminutive cube it "swam," for all the world, I said to myself, like a goldfish in a bowl. The ridiculous simile made me laugh, and in my laughter I relaxed, and forgot time, myself and all things other than that living light.

There is no way to know or tell how long I watched the tiny flame. Many minutes, certainly, perhaps many hours went by while I stared in uncontrollable fascination, following ecstatically each undulation of the imprisoned flame. And as I watched, I became ever more acutely aware of the fact of its desire. It wanted something, and that wanting was a deep, unthinking, unreasoning, naked desire. I could feel the almost irresistible tug of that uncanny craving, that elemental hunger. The pull was alien, but, at the same time, overwhelmingly alluring. It thrilled along by nerves like hungry lightning, and gnawed at my feelings like the first need of life. It became a cry in my ears, and my pulses answered with a longing for which I knew there could be no existing satisfaction.

Then, suddenly, out of the depths of this realization, came the full knowledge of what it was the flame so ardently desired. It wanted me, John Cotter. The instant that blinding thought became clearly focused in my mind, an agony of disruption like that I had felt on the mountain engulfed me. This time, however, there was no fear in it. There was only an exquisite longing of all my elements to leave their combina-

tions and to become—as what?

With shocking certainty I knew, and the knowledge was terrifying. But through the terror an all-encompassing wonder welled up and overflowed body and feeling in a flood of happiness that swept all sense before it. To become like the flame! To be that stable instability it represented. To be that cold, intangible, infinitely desirable fire!

That night my reason 'saved' me. At the ultimate moment of surrender, it drew me back into myself—pulled me back into my combinations, and with the hazy thought that I was unbearably tired, I covered the microscope, turned out the lamps, and fell exhausted across my unopened bed.

DURING the heavy sleep that came over me, I had the first of the many dreams which were to engross me more and more completely until, at last, they became more important to me than the life through which I moved so happily until the day the crystal was discovered.

In the dream I seemed to be standing, quite alone, in a soft haze of dimly violet light. There was no sound, no stir of any wind against my naked flesh, and I felt neither warm nor cold. Never had I been so comfortable, so much at ease, or felt so perfectly secure. I did not think. That is, no formulated speech troubled the smiling surface of my emotional calm. There was no name for anything. I felt, and what I felt was good, although I did not call it that. My sole response to the pleasantness about me was a blind and greedy reaching out for more of the pleasantness. There was no desire to move. All I wanted then or forever was to stand, as I was standing, and feel what I was feeling at that moment.

After a while, through the violet

mist, I saw the flame approaching—and *I thought!* Words moved in the depths of my feeling. "The Flame!", I cried. The words burned across my senses like hot fire, bitter taste, white and searching light. There was a crash like thunder, and abruptly I awoke, frantic, and afraid. An aroma like that of burning benzoin hung all around the room.

The next day, and for many days thereafter, I spent my every spare moment watching for the flame in the tiny crystal. Sometimes my flame was absent for hours together. During those times I would become almost wild with worry and fear that it might never return. Then, when it would appear again, my relief and joy would bring me close to tears.

And that next night, and every night for weeks thereafter, I had a dream. Often it would involve no more than a consciousness of the beautiful haze, the pleasantness. Often the flame would appear. After several disastrous thoughts resulting in experiences like that of the first night, I learned to accept the presence of the flame without thinking about it. Then it would dance around me, executing its beautiful and enticing movements within the field of my emotions, lifting me to rapturous exaltations of delight. Its nearness brought another pleasure, keener and more desirable than the pleasantness of the haze.

FOR some time my life continued in this fashion without great change. August passed by, and September followed it away. October brought the first snow to that high region, and there was less work to do, although some of the men always stayed on at the mines, even during the "closed" months in the middle of the winter. I stayed on, usually, because I loved the mountains

in their winter state, and there was nowhere I would rather be.

But this Autumn I hardly noticed the snow. I did whatever work was required of me during the day, and at night, as soon as I could manage it, I would draw my curtains and give myself up to my invariable delight—watching the flame moving within the crystal. The minute I was reasonably tired, I would hurry to bed, jealous of any moments not spent in sleep, where I was free to explore the violet paradise of those recurring dreams.

On the twenty-ninth of October the flame spoke to me. The date impressed me, because it was just three months after my birthday. Three months after the day I discovered the light and found the stone.

That night I brought out the slide to which I had fastened the crystal with a bit of resin. It was my intention to watch the flame for a little while before going to bed. I had, however, scarcely brought the tiny cube into focus, when an irresistible drowsiness made it almost impossible to keep my eyes open. Half disappointed, I covered the instrument and went to bed. At once I fell asleep, and the sleep was dreamless, for I woke up again, suddenly, about midnight, sure that somebody had called out to me. There was no memory of the violet world of my dreams. More disappointed than ever, and a little angry at an intrusion, I got up and opened the door. It was a perfectly clear night. The light snow that had fallen late in the afternoon lay unbroken all around that part of the house as far as the road, and the sharp wind that had carried the clouds away had dropped off to a small, but most ungentle, breeze. There were no footprints in my path—the light from my open doorway showed it all, clear to the road. I concluded that if anybody

had called out it must have been in passing, and that the shout, if any, had not been intended for me. Having settled the matter to my satisfaction, I crawled, shivering, back into bed.

This time, almost as soon as my eyes were closed, I began to dream in what was, by that time, familiar fashion. There was a brief period of the pleasantness as the violet haze gathered around me. Then the flame appeared, dancing, now near, now farther off, emanating its own sweet pleasure as it moved.

Then I sensed the word. The flame became very still after it had spoken, and I felt the word moving into my consciousness like some tangible thing, felt it like a cool, thin bubble moving through the body of my emotions, a bubble of ecstasy, radiating love.

"Bat-hee!"

So I translated it into the language of the outer world. Later, I learned its meaning, but at that time I had no idea of it. I felt only the infinite, reverential adoration it conveyed. And I awoke.

THE next twenty-one days were passed in fantasy beyond belief. Again and again the flame spoke to me. After a while I began to attempt some sort of response. This was immediately heralded by greatly increased activity on the part of the flame, who spoke much more, pouring out a great variety of words.

After a few more days, or nights, rather, I began to comprehend some of the meanings that lay behind the words. This was the result of no mental action of my own, no process of reason brought about this knowledge. It was simply a slow-growing connection of the feeling aroused by the words, to my accumulated knowledge. I did not translate the words into English and

then attach their meanings to my knowledge. The words, themselves, according to whatever feeling they aroused, became my words for what I know. My reasoning mind took no part in the affair. It was as though I had no reasoning mind. The flame spoke, and I knew. That was all.

The first word I understood was "Bat-hee". It meant Lord, and it carried also the connotations of Master, and Saviour. I was flattered, but definitely bewildered by this idea. However, under the sweet influence of the flame, I accepted its naturalness when applied to myself, and reveled in the beautiful sensations that acceptance produced.

Next I understood the concept "to give." And a little later "knowledge." Then the flame's speech became for me a prayer, addressed to me, John Cotter, and saying "Lord, give me your knowledge; Lord, give me your knowledge; Lord, give me your knowledge." Thus prayed to by such an irresistible creature, how could any human being refuse to obey?

So I tried my best to give the flame the knowledge it desired. I learned many more of its words. I spent much more time with it. Indeed, I spent so many hours, awake and asleep, concentrating my attention upon the flame, that its voice became almost audible to me during my waking hours, speaking to my emotions with the soft, impelling voice of supplication: "Lord, Lord, give your servant of your most precious knowledge of life."

During the night of the seventeenth of November, the flame saw me. It hadn't really seen me before. It had sensed my presence, and it had begun to hear my "voice" and to understand my words a little, but until that night I'm sure it hadn't any clear idea of my bodily form. For the first time the

flame stood utterly still for a very long time before me, and I, John Cotter, stood still. For a long time the two of us looked at one another, face to face, and in that moment I felt like a god, indeed, for the worshipping love that emanated from that delicious creature before me was nothing short of ecstatic.

"Do not touch me!" implored the flame. "Do not destroy me with your love. But return to me, or I shall die!"

"I shall return to you, my Beloved," I replied. "Many times shall I return to you, and give you freely of my knowledge, if only you will dance again in my presence."

With that, the flame began to move once more, ever so slowly at first, then with increasingly rapid and joyous leaps, until the power of its dancing overcame me, and I awoke.

IN ORDER to have more time with the flame, I began to come home early from work, and to go to sleep for a while in the afternoon. I had come to grudge every waking moment that kept me away from that loveliest of creatures. So, two or three days later, during one of these afternoon siestas, the flame appeared and approached me very quietly. I felt from it an emanation of diffidence, of apology that had never been present before.

"Why are you troubled?" I inquired.

"I do not come alone, Lord," replied the flame.

At that, I felt stab of the most terrible jealousy. "Not alone." I had not realized until that instant how much of my happiness had depended upon the fact that the flame and its delights were *mine*, and mine alone. "Not alone!" I was almost angry. But I felt the flame imploring and beseeching me to be kind. Shamed, I listened, then, to what it had to say.

"I brought these others of my people to this place, Lord, because it was here that I saw you. We want to build a temple here, but first, Master, can you show yourself to these others, my friends, as you showed yourself to me? Can you do this, Master, in order that they too may know who only now believe?"

This frightened me a little. It is one thing to feel like a god—and another to find yourself actually becoming one. But my love for the first flame overcame that little fear, and I tried hard to see the others it said it had brought along. The flame seemed to stand aside a little, and there they were. I counted eight. All were lovely, all unbelievably beautiful, and all of them looked very much like my own dearly beloved. As I continued to look at them, however, certain differences became noticeable. One was very crooked, compared to the other. One was dimmer, and another colored strangely. I asked my flame, "Why are these others not as beautiful as yourself?"

Waves of shame and apology swept around me from my visitors. None of them offered any reply, and I found myself wishing they could all be lovely and perfect, as my own dearly beloved was lovely and perfect. As I formed the wish, there was a commotion among the flames, and they began to cry out to one another. When they became quiet again, I saw to my great surprise, that all those imperfections I had found so deplorable had completely disappeared. Before me stood nine lovely creatures, all so beautiful I could hardly distinguish one from another any more. And then they danced for me and praised me. I had wrought a miracle with a wish, and I was fully as delighted with it as they were. As yet I dared not face the possibilities my

new found power opened up, and I watched quietly and happily as the flames danced. I heard them sing and shout together, as though from some great distance, and their singing sounded like psalms in my ears, for they continually repeated poetic phrases extolling my love and wisdom, and glorifying my miraculous powers.

That was the real beginning of all I, John Cotter, shall become.

MY FLAME continued to bring other flames to the crystal until there are now hundreds whom I know and who know me. I have learned the names of many of them, but I shall not write them here. When I go into their world, I want nothing left behind that can ever call me back again into this one. I am jealous at the thought of still other human beings following me there. I believe I have found the secret of the ages, the key that unlocks the pathway into those half-legendary regions of the earth men have so long and so mistakenly (I truly believe) called hell. For me it is not a region of torment, unless torment is an ecstasy almost beyond endurance. But I have found it, in a sense, a region of burning, for the creatures who inhabit its violet spaces are like, in substance, cold fire and flame.

I have learned, at last, how to become as one of them. They desire my knowledge, and it will be my great delight to walk among them, as one of them, and impart that knowledge to those who will adore and reverence me. I love them better than I have ever been able to love any creature of my own kind. And here, among humanity, I, John Cotter, am not a god.

The flames have built me a temple, according to their promises. In it they have placed the crystal that has been constantly under my microscope. There

they come to worship it as the gateway into Heaven—and I will never tell them the truth about this world from which I come. It may be that I can help them more in another way.

I know what I must do in order to pass from this world into theirs, permanently. When the moon is dark again, I shall take the tiny crystal back to the place in the tunnel where I found it. The exact spot may be hard to find, but I shall be patient. Because I took away the rock in which the crystal was imbedded, the cube will be in my hand at the moment it makes contact with the axes of its original position. Although the tunnel and my work-bench are separated in this space, by several miles, there has only been a slight stress produced in the world of the flames by the removal of the crystal—and that is due only to the fact that this, my fabulous crystal, is rare indeed in both its properties and substance. I shall say no more on this subject. The alchemists knew—some of them, at least. Let those who would follow me go to them for that same information I possess. I prefer to go alone.

When I return the crystal to the wall of the mine, when I bring it back to that exact spot from which it came, the stress that now exists between their world and this will be relieved. I know, from their knowledge and mine, that when this happens I shall be drawn through the diminishing distance, I shall be somehow changed, and appear among them—as a flame, among flames.

And what will I be giving up for all of this? In the middle ages people would have said "a soul." But those to whom I go possess souls. How else could they have prayed to me, and loved me? And they have minds, or why should they have need of knowledge? Among them I, no longer John Cotter, will have whatever mind they have, and whatever soul is theirs, however alien and however strange and unspeakable its combinations will delight me forever. That is now infinitely more desirable to me than any soul I may be said to have "lost." For when I go to them, I shall go only in my knowledge and out of my own, and their, desire. I cannot reason with myself about the right or wrong, the desirability or the undesirability, of this thing I am about to do. I desire it, therefore it is right. And that, my own knowledge tells me, is not reason.

Therefore, I, John Cotter, shall become a flame. Perhaps some miner, deep within a shaft, will see me moving through the rocks of this hot, harsh world. Perhaps he will even touch me, as that being who was John Cotter touched the flame-creature on the mountain side. If he is so foolish he will be struck cold with the fear of more than death. I shall not care, nor will I ever again desire to be aware of what I have left behind. And surely, no one will ever be mad enough, or willing enough to give up his precious and ephemeral soul, to seek and discover a crystal such as I have found.

ALLERGIES—WHAT THEY REALLY ARE



By



John McCabe Moore

WHENEVER the human body absorbs a foreign substance (i.e. a substance not normal to the chemical systems of the body) whether through the alimentary canal or

through the skin, there is a greater or less tendency for the organism to erect a specialized defense system, consisting of substances similar to antibodies. If the substances formed by the body

to combat the chemical invader are manufactured in considerable amounts in response to high absorption of the specific invader, the "anti-bodies" themselves disturb the enzymatic system of the individual and the so-called allergy appears.

The above facts pertain whether the sensitivity (or allergy) of the person is resultant of exposure to metal, feathers, pollen, impalpable dust or foods. In the case that the disturbing influence, for example, is the protein matter composing wool, inhalation of microscopic bits of wool causes the cells irritated to become unbalanced osmotically (which means a prior disturbance in their enzyme balance). The cells then tend to swell and exude mucus and moisture. The cells of a non-sensitive person, on the other hand, more or less ignore the pieces of wool. Because the particles are not capable of upsetting the enzymatics of normal cells, the latter do not attempt to weep the invader away.

Perhaps a more fundamental question is the manner in which allergies or sensitivities arise. The lack of certain important nutritives, such as vitamins and amino acids and essential minerals, causes fundamental disturbances in the sum-total of the cell's metabolism. Massive doses of vitamin C sometimes stops allergies. Sometimes amino acid preparations stop them. Sometimes calcium corrects the conditions. However, sometimes the cause is somewhat deeper than lack of a certain food-substance such as are mentioned. Sometimes the slowing of alimentary passage of food-substances is a very important factor. This is because the retention of already digested substance increases the exposure of the membranes of the canal to the products of putrefaction presented by the bacteria always present in the area. Thus certain proteins absorbed there must be employed by body cells. If these proteins are poisonous their use by the cell becomes more difficult as the amount of absorption increases. This sometimes goes so far as to make it difficult for the system to employ such wholesome foods as malt, milk, eggs, or chocolate.

More simply stated, intestinal inactivity directly occasions allergies in a good many cases by overloading the enzymatic system of the body. But, in the light of the fact that sub-nutrition affects almost exactly the same number of people as does constipation, it is an open question as to whether the latter condition is not likely to be a reflection of hidden hunger, whether simple or complex, in the majority of cases.

Going on from this point, it is postulated that the achievement of a completely satisfactory diet, by the means of food substances themselves or through supplementary concentrates, should strike the majority of allergies at the roots.

There is a disposition of people of the over-tense type toward allergies. However the excitement state itself upsets the enzymatic processes, as well as gravely disturbing the function of the

alimentary canal. Thus the appearance of allergy in the highly emotional is virtually to be expected. So far there is little indication that medicine is going to come forward with a method of correcting the endocrine balance of the over-excitable person. Strict mental and physical hygiene, however, should militate against allergy appearance even in such individuals.

The eight-month infant (i.e. a month premature) is likely to be very hard to adjust to diet because the final preparations of his digestive system for the handling of food has not occurred. However it is so difficult to identify a baby as being a month premature that the trial and error method must be patiently employed in order to find suitable a diet for such babies allergic to their food.

Some individuals even have their enzymatics disturbed by too much vitamin of one variety or another (e.g. vitamin C). In such case it may well be that the person's manufacture of vitamin C is extraordinarily good, and the additional absorption from C-rich foods may disturb the enzymatics.

Both bacteria and viruses, and less commonly, colds, bring about the allergic manifestations accompanying enzymatic imbalance. This corresponds closely with the intestinal sensitization for poisons formed by germs there.

Migraine headaches may be caused either by malnutrition or by enzymatic disturbances of extrinsic nature. In either case they may be manifestations of allergy. Hay fever, affecting the nasal and sinus areas, is essentially a matter of allergy. When the bronchial tubes are affected with the condition called asthma, another type of allergy is manifest. Allergy may underlie almost any type of digestive disturbance. Cold-sores, hives and genuine eczema affect the mouth and skin areas. From this it is easily realized that the very specialization of different tissues, implying functional and chemical differences, makes one or another area more liable to upset by a certain sort of allergy.

As to the inheritance of allergy—that is impossible. But the tendencies for the same weaknesses to be passed along from parents to children cause the children to be disposed toward the environment, chemically speaking, much as the parents are. Thus the predisposition to allergy is often definitely inherited.

Ethylene disulfonate is a remarkable substance which has been carefully shushed in the press. This remarkable substance has the power to realign the whopper-jawed enzyme system of the human body. There is thus a method of giving the allergic person, regardless of the nature of the allergy, a sort of new lease upon health. The substance could not effect a permanent cure, but it causes long-time relinquishment of allergic processes, so that dietary readjustment could get in preventive work before the effects of the disulfonate vanish.

ALL ABOARD FOR THE MOON

(Continued from page 45)

this equipment for? Might as well find out right now whether these high-frequency waves can get through to us or to earth. The experimental station at Schenectady was set up to keep in touch with this ship. They may be trying to make contact this minute!"

Gil adjusted the dials for reception and listened. There was a low humming sound and a slight crackling. In the comparative quiet of the silently plunging space ship, a voice suddenly boomed out.

"Calling Station M-O-O-N! . . . Calling station M-O-O-N! . . . Space ship, 'Goodbye, World!' . . . Come on in . . .!"

Gil gave a great shout of exultation. "Thank God! They've done it! They've beamed their waves through the ionic shield! This means there are no longer any space limits to communication!"

Wilbur and Diana, equally excited, got up and walked exaggeratedly toward Gil. He had now turned on his high-frequency transmitter.

"This is Station M-O-O-N," he spoke into a microphone. "Calling Experimental Station G.E. Schenectady . . . Space ship, 'Goodbye, World!' . . . This is Gil Benson . . . Come in, please . . .!"

He shifted over to receiving and waited, anxiously.

The booming voice again: "This is Experimental Station G.E. acknowledging . . . Greetings! Carl Mack speaking. This is great, Benson! . . . Every top man in G.E. is standing by . . . We're all thrilled! . . . Are you O.K.? . . . Over!"

Gil Benson's attention was now centered on sending and receiving. He worked the dials back and forth as his

two fellow space travelers listened, breathlessly.

"This is Station M-O-O-N . . . Space ship, 'Goodbye, World!' . . . Rough start, but all O.K. . . . How are you getting me?"

THE answer came hurtling back. "Coming in clear . . . Army radar station in New Mexico has picked up your space ship . . . is following you . . . Whole planet excited . . . Any message?"

Wilbur touched Gil's arm. "Tell someone to pick up my shirts at the laundry," he said.

"Shut up!" said Gil. Then, into the transmitter, "This is Station M-O-O-N . . . Gil Benson . . . Message: Get word to Professor Crowley and Jerry Torrence. Tell them start of flight accidental. One of guests touched starting lever . . . Two passengers aboard—Miss Diana Fenimore and Wilbur Williams . . ."

"There's your publicity break, Baby," said Wilbur. "Your name will go all over the world! If I was only on earth I could fix it for you fine. 'Beautiful Red-Head Takes Off to See Man in Moon. Object: Matrimony!'"

"You must think I'm awfully hard up!" said Diana.

The booming voice from earth again: "Message being relayed . . . Question: When do you estimate arrival on moon?"

Gil Benson consulted the time and his instruments.

"At present rate of acceleration, we should arrive in vicinity of moon in about nine and one-half hours from starting time . . . Will keep you advised of progress. This is Gil Benson

... Station Moon ... Space ship, 'Goodbye, World!' now signing off ...!"

Gil cut off the power in his radio set and wheeled joyously about. He seized Diana and lifted her lightly over his head. It required only the slightest exertion to do this since her body had no appreciable weight.

"You crazy red-head!" he cried. "Do you realize that you are seeing history made? That you've just heard a man in space, traveling over twenty-five thousand miles an hour, talking to someone on earth?"

"I know something more wonderful than that," said Diana.

"What's that?" asked Gil.

"I'm out here in space, talking to that very man!" she said.

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "What a time to get romantic!"

CHAPTER VI

NOT since Charles Lindbergh's historic flight from New York to Paris in 1927, had there been such world interest in a space adventure as there now was in Gil Benson's spectacular rocket attempt to reach the moon. It had taken Lindbergh something over thirty-three hours to cover a distance of approximately 3,600 miles in flying from Roosevelt airport, Long Island, to LeBourget field, just outside of Paris. Whereas, Gil Benson, thanks to the stupendous advance of science, would reach the moon, a distance of 238,857 miles, if all went well, in a little over *nine hours!* This was incredible but startlingly true.

It was front page news in smashing black headlines that radio operators on earth had actually talked with Gil Benson from thousands of miles out in space. It was immensely thrilling to contemplate that radio communication

could now be maintained throughout the entire journey and that, hour by hour progress of the rocket, "Goodbye, World!" could be reported through radio and news bulletins, as issued from Schenectady. Plans were being rushed with the hope that radio and television could bring to the people of the earth a first-hand account of actual vision of the pioneer landing of a human being on earth's barren satellite.

Gil Benson's time of arrival was estimated as taking place about twelve noon, New York time, or nine in the morning, Los Angeles time. Peoples throughout the world were busy computing his moment of arrival as it pertained to their own time, so that they would have the unparalleled thrill of seeing and hearing this event, did such a spectacle prove to be possible.

An enterprising television producer hit upon the plan of later bringing all Gil's glamour girl friends to the studio and projecting their alluring images to the moon, with the query: "Don't you wish you were back?" As a stunt, this idea received feature space in papers with pictures of the beauties Gil Benson had left behind.

But Diana Fenimore, the mysterious red-head, the dark horse in the field of feminine heart-beats, who had actually accompanied Gil Benson on his moon adventure, usurped the limelight. She sent news-hounds sniffing in all directions for information concerning her and their trail finally led to Buzz Reynolds, head of the Buzz Reynolds' Flying Circus.

When interviewed concerning his former parachute jumper, Buzz said she was the greatest, natural dare-devil show-woman he had ever met and that she would do anything for a thrill.

"I can well believe," declared Buzz, "as Miss Delano has suggested, that the red-head deliberately planned and exe-

cuted this take-off in the rocket so she might make the trip. It 'sounds just like her. I don't envy Gil Benson. To have that red-head with him is as dangerous as the moon trip itself!"

Rival press agents, however, were not sorry to learn that Wilbur Williams had left earth with his wealthiest and most notorious client. Competition would be a little less steep now in Hollywood's make-believe and big build-up alleys.

"If dear Wilbur doesn't return," said one of his most caustic rivals, "we'll hold a memorial service and shoot a rocket to the moon with a wreath in it!"

Ruth Delano had been compelled to absorb considerable ribbing for her dramatic relation to the moon rocket's departure. She had added a new version to the age-old role of "the girl who had been left behind."

Pictures of M.G.M.'s pin-up star clinging piteously to the towering portable stair rail and staring bewilderedly into space had been published in all the early morning papers. One caption writer had titled the photograph:

**DARING RED-HEAD SNATCHES
MAN INTO SKY FROM UNDER
VERY NOSE OF RIVAL!**

Ruth Delano tore this paper into shreds when she saw it and it is well she was not playing a dramatic scene at the time for she most certainly would have bitten her leading man.

"**T**O THINK this would have to happen to me," she raged. "Something like this could actually ruin my career! If I could get hold of that red-head, I'd scratch her eyes out!"

But Ruth Delano's chances of gaining such satisfaction were diminishing at the rate of four hundred and twenty miles every minute!

In the moon rocket, 51,000 miles out in space, it was 1:30 a.m. Arizona time, by Gil Benson's wrist watch. Each moment was increasing the tension on board. The newness of the experience, which had brought about temporary exultation, was now giving way to realization of the growing perils, known and unknown of such a voyage.

Gil, compelled to press his unskilled passengers into service, had assigned Diana to keep the log of the trip under his dictation, and Wilbur had been shown how to carry on radio communication.

"It's sure going to be tough without Jerry and Professor Crowley," he said. "You've both got to be ready for all emergencies. We can't tell what may happen any minute!"

The sky had long since changed its color from blue to black. In this strange, dark firmament, the stars shone out with a fierce brilliance. The pitted face of the moon became more and more clearly etched each passing minute, its crazy quilt of craters and jagged peaks standing out like the three-dimensional pictures in a stereoscope.

The Army radar set had been placed in operation to scan space in all directions, to detect any possible meteors which might be flashing across their path.

But now a new and startling effect began to manifest itself. The earth, directly behind them, was an immense dark ball, around which an increasing bead-like corona of sun's rays had been observed for some time.

These rays suddenly flared into gigantic bright tongues of flame, leaping thousands of miles out into space. The earth became a huge black spot against the much larger body of the sun, the light from which was now so dazzling that their eyes could not stand the sight.

Gil, almost blinded, fumblingly opened a panel in the cabin wall and took out some dark-lensed glasses which he put into the hands of Diana and Wilbur.

"Put these on!" he ordered. "We're passing out of the shadow of the earth and the sun's going to be terrific! I'll have to turn the bright side of the rocket toward the sun to deflect the light and heat or we'll be cooked in here!"

He switched on the atomic power and grabbed the directional lever. The ship responded and all gasped their relief.

WILBUR spoke into the microphone: "Hello, Earth! . . . The sun just hit us and, for a few seconds, I thought we'd lose our eyesight! Boy, you can certainly see the sun's rays out here! There isn't any atmosphere to stop them and they come shooting at you like liquid fire. I can't see the earth now at all. I don't even dare look in that direction. You'd think half the sky was on fire. If there's a cold spot on the moon, I want to get to it! . . . Gil Benson has just shifted the bright side of our ship toward the sun and this helps plenty. I thought you were going to hear our flesh frying for a moment but we're okay now! . . . Stand by, please!"

Diana, at Gil's bidding, was recording: "Traveling in a vacuum . . . no resistance to our movement . . . ship in free fall, can be held on course whether head-on or side-wise . . . power needed only to change position . . . has been turned off now . . ."

Wilbur resumed his broadcast: "Here I am again! . . . I'm looking off toward the moon. With my back turned to the sun's side of the ship, I can take off my dark glasses . . . Gil wants me to explain that since there is no air where we are, and no dust particles to

reflect light, you can't see the sun's rays until they hit something . . . Of course they're hitting the moon and I'm getting an eyeful of it . . . but all around the moon and everywhere else—it's inky black, except for the stars and, Boys and Girls, there's billions of 'em . . . what am I saying? . . . Trillions! . . . Decillions! . . . Septillions! . . . I can't count 'em! . . . And *are* they bright?!"

Wilbur's running commentary was broken into by Gil who cried out: "Radar! It's picked up something!"

An object was appearing on the radar screen.

"It must be a meteor," said Gil. "It's some thousands of miles away and it's coming at us from the sun side. That means we won't be able to see it till it passes us—but it *could* cross our path!" He explored the object with his radar beam. "It's size is enormous!" he announced, "and it's traveling *thirty-five miles a minute!* We may have to change our course to keep it from hitting us!"

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "If it isn't one thing, it's another, out here!" He spoke into the microphone. "Hello, Earth! . . . A meteor is going to pass us—I *hope!* . . . Gil Benson says it's a big one! He's checking it on the radar. We're watching for it but we can't look in the direction it's coming on account of the sun. If it shoots between the sun and us, we'll never see it, but if it passes on our other side, we might catch a glimpse . . . oh, MY GOSH!"

Gil Benson and Diana cried out in horror at the same time. Flashing into view on the side of the ship away from the sun, but caught in its rays and glowing brilliantly with reflected light, a monstrous object of fantastic irregularity filled the sky in front of them, blotting out the moon and stars! For an awful moment it seemed as though they were running head-on into it. They

ducked instinctively, expecting oblivion, but in the same split second, this wild roamer of the black void went tearing on beyond and to their left.

IT WAS thousands of miles away from them, yet too close for comfort. Gil switched on his atomic power motors and veered hard to the right. "We're in danger!" he said. "If we hit any of those fragments, *we're goners!*"

"What do you think, Gil, are we going to miss them?" asked Diana.

"I'm playing safe," said Gil. "I'm making a ten thousand mile detour around that baby! Better get on the radio, Wilbur, and tell them we're still here!"

Hollywood's greatest press agent returned to the microphone. He was still mightily shaken and when he tried to speak he was too weak to make a sound.

"Hello, Earth," he finally managed to whisper. "This is 'Goodbye, World' and, brother, it was almost goodbye for good! . . . A big meteor just missed us! . . . Stand by . . . I can't talk yet . . . I swallowed my voice . . .!"

At seven o'clock in the morning, Arizona time, Gil Benson, after careful computing, announced that they were now on what he termed their "last lap" toward the moon. They had traversed about 200,000 miles from earth and, within two more hours, barring necessity for another detour to evade possible meteors, they should be over the moon's surface, preparing for a landing.

Most of the journey had been made with the instruments set at automatic pilot. Even so, it had been a nerve-trying night, if one could refer to time in space as "night," but it helped the three travelers from earth to keep their minds fixed on time as it existed in the part of the universe from which they had come. The tension was still on but

it had eased somewhat through their having become more accustomed to the conditions and hazards they were required to face.

Wilbur had even been able to assume a fatalistic point of view. "Oh, well," he philosophized, "if a person has to die, I suppose it doesn't make any difference whether you die on earth, in space or on the moon. You're just as dead one place as the other."

"That's a cheerful thought," said Diana. "I wonder if something happened to us all inside this space ship and it missed the moon, would it keep on going in space forever?"

"It certainly would," said Gil, "unless and until it should come within the gravitational pull of some planet, in which case it would probably become a minor meteor and burn up through friction in the upper atmosphere of that body! Of course, if the planet was like the moon and had no atmosphere, the ship would crash on it—and that would be that!"

"Let's get off this subject," said Wilbur. "I'm sorry I ever started it." He put his hand to his stomach. "Say," he said. "I feel funny down here. I guess I must be hungry!"

"Me, too!" said Diana. "I'm glad you mentioned it. How about it, Gil? Isn't it time for breakfast?"

Gil Benson grinned. "How do you think we're going to eat out here?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Wilbur, "but we've got to do it. I'd like a cup of coffee and some ham and eggs."

"Which you're not going to get. You watch these instruments and I'll bring you something."

Gil left the control board and walked across the cabin with his steel shoes clinging to the magnetized floor. He entered the galley and came back carrying three large sized tubes as well as

three strange appearing collapsible rubber liquid containers. Wilbur eyed them, unappetizingly.

"No tooth paste for me," he said, wryly. "I'm not that hungry. And I don't need a hot water bottle, either!"

"Then you're not going to eat," said Gil. "This is the only way it can be done properly where there is no gravity." He handed Wilbur a tube and a container and did likewise to Diana.

"WHAT'S in these things?" Wilbur asked.

"You've got a preparation of chocolate fondant in the tube and some of Arizona's finest water in the rubber bag," said Gil. "And if you're smart, you'll put the end of that tube in your mouth and squirt its contents into you."

Wilbur and Diana looked at one another, then commenced unscrewing the caps on their tubes. They placed the ends, as instructed, in their mouths and squeezed the tubes. Their cheeks bulged. They chewed and swallowed.

"Tastes pretty good," Wilbur admitted.

"It's nourishing," Gil replied. "And that's what counts on a trip like this."

"What would happen if I poured some of this water out?" asked Wilbur, removing the cap from the liquid container.

"Try it and see," said Gil.

Wilbur squeezed the sides of the rubber bag and a round globule of water oozed from the funnel-like opening, floating toward the ceiling, under impetus of the squeeze.

"Good gosh!" he said. "Is that funny?" He tried it again, like a small boy, pointing the mouth of the container toward Diana. Another round globule of water emerged and headed toward her.

She put up her hand to ward it off.

At contact, the surface tension of the water was broken. It spread out in squashy fashion and crawled wetly over her hand and arm.

Diana shrieked. "Oh, how awful!" she said.

Gil laughed. "You see how difficult it would be to pour drinks? Food wouldn't stay on plates and water wouldn't stay in a glass. At the least touch they would go elsewhere."

"Well," said Wilbur, placing the liquid container to his mouth and taking several swallows, "if I have to return to my baby days, I guess I can do it!"

Diana and Gil followed suit and all three soon finished their light breakfast in outer space.

Then Diana stood up. "All right, boys," she said. "Give me your 'dirty dishes'. I want to be the first stewardess on a space ship. I'll take these to the galley."

"Put them in drawer number ten," said Gil, handing her his empty tube and deflated liquid container.

Wilbur did likewise. "Don't drop these," he warned.

"How can I?" smiled Diana.

Clutching containers and tubes so they wouldn't get away from her, she crossed the cabin floor with elaborate steps, and disappeared into the pantry.

"What a woman!" said Wilbur. "Can you imagine the big offers she'll get if we make it back to earth?"

"Don't look so far ahead," said Gil. "We could easily crash on the moon."

Wilbur paled. "Well, it was just a passing thought," he said. "Ye gods, Gil, you tell me that just when I'm commencing to feel relaxed!"

"Can't help it. We'll soon be entering the gravitational field of the moon. Then I'll have to start the atomic motors to keep from approaching the moon surface too fast. Fortunately, we can cruise with this space ship at

slow speed but this is still a mighty big piece of metal to get down out of the sky, especially since I've never had any experience in doing it before!"

Wilbur moistened his lips, nervously. "Maybe we'd better not try to land," he suggested. "Maybe we can just fly close to the moon, take some pictures, and beat it back to earth!"

Gil flashed a smile. Then, seriously: "That wouldn't help us any. It's going to be even tougher landing on earth. We'll have to dip in and out of the earth's atmosphere a number of times, circling the earth while doing it, and slowing up our velocity so we won't burn up like a meteor. I'd rather get my first practice in right here!"

Hollywood's greatest press agent picked a raveling off his coat, released it and watched it stand idly in space.

"Oh, well," he said, after a moment, "it was nice knowing you. I suppose all things must end some time—including *me*!"

Gil stood up and looked toward the galley. "I wonder what's keeping Diana?" he said.

As he spoke he heard her exclaim and two of the liquid containers came floating through the doorway.

"She's probably made a mistake and put herself in the drawer," said Wilbur.

Gil grabbed the containers out of the air and took them with him into the galley. He saw Diana frantically pushing the various contents of drawer number ten back in as all were trying to bob out.

"These darn things!" she said, "I can't do anything with them!"

"Take it easy!" laughed Gil. "The harder you push them in, the faster they'll come out. Do it gently—like this . . . !"

He blocked the articles with his hands and fitted them quietly back into the drawer where they gradually sub-

sided. Then he pushed the drawer shut.

"GIVE me gravitation," said Diana. "This is an all-fired nuisance." She looked up at Gil. "Your face, young man! That lipstick! I can't stand it another minute . . . the thought of all those other women kissing you!" she added.

Gil grinned. "They gave me a terrific send-off," he said.

Diana slipped the strap of her pocket-book from her arm. She carefully opened the bag, rubbed her handkerchief over a stick of cold cream, and turned to Gil.

"Hold still, now," she directed. "I'm going to clean you up. If you should land this way, you might give the man in the moon a lot of wrong ideas!"

America's Number One Playboy submitted good-naturedly to a vigorous facial massage.

"It's hard to get off," said Diana. "You'd think they'd *branded* you!"

"Please leave my skin on," said Gil. "This is the only face I've got."

Diana critically surveyed the result of her labors. "There, I guess that will do," she said. "But isn't this all slightly ridiculous? We three people from earth going to the moon in *evening dress*?"

"Do you put on your old clothes to go visiting?" asked Gil. "I think you have exactly the right attire. That's a stunning design, by the way—the moon and those stars. Are you sure you didn't have it designed purposely for this trip?"

Diana's blue eyes had not lost their ability to speak for themselves. "Why, Gil," she said, with just the right reproof in her voice. "How *could* you? You know that was all an accident—although, I'll admit, I stowed away on a trans-oceanic plane once . . . !"

Gil tried to translate the meaning in

her eyes and gave up. "I can't figure you out," he said. "What kind of a woman *are* you?"

Diana smiled. "I'm just a woman who's been *cheated*," she said.

Gil frowned, wonderingly. "*Cheated*?" he repeated.

"Yes," said the girl with the red hair and blue eyes. "I didn't get a chance to *kiss* you goodbye. Do you suppose I could welcome you to the moon?"

Her face was upturned to his and her lips were suddenly alluring. Gil Benson was a man of action. While there was no gravitation, there was certainly *attraction*! They clung to each other as though they were conscious of their fall through space—and when the clinch was broken, Diana whispered: "Shall I record this in the log, Mr. Benson?"

"No," said Gil, "this is our own private scientific experiment."

"Then let's continue our research," said Diana.

They kissed again and, as they did so, Hollywood's greatest press agent appeared in the doorway, calling, "Hey, Gil, come quick!" He was excited to begin with but he was even more excited when he saw this. "Holy smoke! . . . Excuse me! . . . What goes on here?!"

"We just wanted to see how it would feel," said Diana, "to kiss in space."

Wilbur advanced toward her. "That's a great idea!" he said. "Let's try it!"

For once, the girl with the blue eyes was taken aback—but she was game. Wilbur gave her a resounding smack.

"How did it feel to you?" she asked.

"Terrific!" said Wilbur. "Let's try it again!"

Gil tapped Wilbur's shoulder. "We've fooled around enough," he said.

"Oh, say, Gil!" exclaimed Wilbur.

"I was coming in to tell you. I think I've discovered a new moon! I was

looking off on the sun side through my dark glasses . . . there's something out there . . . it's tremendous!"

"LET'S have a look," said Gil, leading the way into the cabin, followed by Diana and Wilbur. All adjusted their dark glasses and stared out.

"My, yes!" said Diana. "There it is! A big crescent! Funny we never saw that before!"

"That's not another moon," said Gil. "That's *our earth*!"

"The *earth*!" said Wilbur. "What's it doing off there?"

"Our angle of flight has changed and we've gotten far enough out," said Gil, "so we can see the ball of our earth away from the sun. When we get to the moon, we'll see the earth go through different phases—quarter, half and full—just as the moon does."

"Well, what do you know?!" said Wilbur. "Remind me to study astronomy some time!"

"It's past sunrise in Arizona right now," Gil continued. "Our earth has been turning right along and you can begin to see the outlines of our continent in that crescent! Wait till we see our earth like a *full* moon! That will be like getting a close-up look at a great illuminated globular map!"

"Won't *that* be something!" said Diana. "I can hardly wait!"

Gil turned away from the earth side windows, removed his dark glasses and looked toward the moon.

"We'll be coming in for a landing in a little over an hour," he said. "We've got a lot to do to get ready. I've already set the automatic cameras to take pictures of the lunar landscape as we approach. Wilbur, you'll have to stand by the television and radio and keep them both in operation. If possible we want to televise our landing back to earth."

"Great stuff!" said Wilbur, "If we can do it . . . ! I suppose you want every kind of a record you can get?"

"Yes, our wire recorder has been making a record of everything we've said here," revealed Gil. "It can be transcribed later."

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "Why didn't you tell me? What have I said?"

"You'll find out eventually," said Gil, "if all goes well. If it doesn't, perhaps the next man who lands on the moon may salvage some of our equipment and play off this wire recorder—and get a clue as to what happened."

"Don't talk so pessimistic!" said Wilbur. "You'll give me high blood pressure."

Gil smiled. "We'll have Diana's written record in our log and your radio reports back to earth as other means of preserving the events of this trip."

"Well," said Diana. "I'm ready for anything! Bring on the moon!"

Gil switched on the atomic power motors.

"Now what?" said Wilbur.

"We're coming under the moon's gravitational influence," said Gil. "And we've got to do something about it. Get Schenectady!"

Wilbur opened his transmitter and began sending.

"This is station M-O-O-N. Space ship 'Goodbye, World!' calling Experimental Station G. E. Schenectady . . . This is Wilbur Williams . . . Come in, please!"

There was a moment of silence and then a booming voice.

"This is Experimental Station G.E. Schenectady acknowledging . . . Hello, Williams . . . What's new out there?"

"Plenty! We've just entered the moon's field of gravity," Wilbur reported. "Gil Benson's started up the motors and is turning the ship around in

the direction we're falling so as to slow up our speed." He motioned to Gil. "I'll let him explain this."

Gil, having completed the operation, stepped before the microphone.

"Hello, Mack . . . are you still with us?"

"You bet, Benson, and it didn't take any black coffee to keep me awake, either. Everybody's sticking until you report a safe landing."

"Everything's under control so far. The moon, as you know, has a velocity of attraction of two miles a second. We've overcome that now with our motors and are falling toward the moon at a reduced speed. I'll gradually keep lowering this speed to almost zero. I'm looking for a landing site now."

Mack's booming voice came back from earth.

"Good boy, Benson! We've arranged a re-broadcast of your moon arrival on every network . . . biggest hook-up in world history. It's getting close to noon our time and you never saw more excitement . . . I understand Times Square, New York, is jammed with people. The New York Times has rigged up a big television screen on the side of the Times Building. If reception is good, you can imagine what a thrill your fellow humans are going to get down here on earth!"

"I'M SORRY I'm not going to be there to see it," cut in Wilbur. "Gil had to get back on the job. He's slowing up the ship more and more. We're so close to the moon now that it fills the sky below us. It scares me to look at it. It is the damndest sight—pardon me—I ever saw! We've got our dark glasses on because it's plenty bright. If there was a man on the moon, I could see him now—but there's not a sign of any kind of life. It's the roughest, wildest, rockiest looking landscape you can

possibly picture! Gil says we're *only* eight thousand miles away! It won't be long now . . . Here—maybe we can pick this scene up by television . . . it's worth trying . . . tell me if it comes through . . ." Wilbur started the television apparatus in operation. He looked anxiously at Gil Benson who was at the ship's controls. "Everything going okay?"

Gil nodded, his eyes searching the surface of the moon. Diana stood beside him, holding in her hands a large relief map of the moon, especially prepared for this trip. It contained all the prominent mountains, craters, deep valleys, ridges, walls, rills, cracks, great dark areas, strange ray formations and other surface markings discovered and identified by earth's astronomers during the history of man's telescopic study of this solitary satellite.

"I wouldn't know where to land," said Diana, bewildered and somewhat terrified.

Gil put his finger on the map above and a little left of center. "This is the section I intend to aim at," he said. "It's below the great Tycho crater and above that tremendous mountain range called the 'Apennines.' There seems to be a big level plains area in that vicinity which should be ideal for landing. Let's see if we can locate this spot from our present position."

Diana looked with Gil at the rugged features of the moonscape. As they did so, a familiar voice from earth boomed out.

"Calling Station M-O-O-N . . . Space rocket, 'Goodbye, World' . . . This is Experimental Station G.E. Schenectady . . . Carl Mack speaking . . . We're getting you . . . the television images are coming through! . . . *What a panorama! . . . What a thrill! . . . We're cutting in the networks, radio and television . . . we know you've probably*

got your hands full but try to keep us advised . . . whole world standing on end! . . . We're pulling for you to make it . . . Come in, please . . . Over!"

Wilbur opened up his transmitter. "Hello, Earth! . . . Glad you're seeing part of what we're seeing! . . . Of course it's not like being here—*not much!* . . . Do you begin to notice that strange coloring on the moon? . . . All those dark brown and black stretches? Those seem to be rocks . . . and those tremendous light streaks, fanning out from different centers . . . I can't tell, from here, what they are or what causes them . . . Wait till I ask Gil . . . !"

Wilbur laughed. "Gil says *he* doesn't know—that no one on earth does, either . . . so I guess I'm not so dumb . . . but, Brother, if we land okay, we're sure as hell—I mean—we're certainly going to find out!" He turned to look at Gil who was further decreasing the space ship's velocity of approach. "How close are we now?" he asked. "My body feels a lot heavier than it did."

"Mine, too," said Diana. "It's a strange sensation after feeling like you almost didn't have any weight at all!"

"This is about how you'll feel while you are on the moon," said Gil. "We're within a thousand miles of it now. I hope we're getting some good photographs. That view is absolutely *stupendous!*"

"NEVER mind the photographs," said Wilbur. "You just get us down all right! Those are the wickedest looking mountain peaks I ever saw. I'd hate to get hung up on one!"

The moon had been so well charted from earth that it was like following a road map in an automobile to pick out its lunar landmarks as the space ship, now descending almost like a huge ele-

vator, dropped down, down, down, being braked at different altitudes by application of atomic power motors, until it was only ten miles above the indescribably scarred and wrinkled surface.

The zero hour for the three earth passengers on their pioneer voyage through space had now arrived and they shuddered at the thought of settling on so barren and forbidding a terrain.

"If there's a man in the moon, he's crazy!" said Wilbur. He spoke into the microphone: "Hello, Earth! Well, this is our big moment. Gil Benson is taking us down for an attempted landing. I'm watching the altimeter . . . We're down to five . . . four . . . three . . . two miles! I can see Tycho crater from here and it's enormous! There are craters of all sizes all over the place—but there's a big stretch of what looks like smooth volcanic rock beneath us and that's what Gil's heading for. We've passed over the Apennines mountain range . . . the sharpest peaks I ever saw—they looked like up-ended ice-picks! . . . Now we're down to less than a mile and we're settling very slowly. The power in these motors is certainly wonderful! . . . Oh, boy! There're some awful cracks in that surface! We just cleared one that looked like the Grand Canyon . . . Hold everything, folks . . . This is it! . . . Gil's putting us down!"

America's Number One Playboy was anything but a playboy now. He leveled off the two hundred foot space ship, inclined its nose slightly toward the moon's surface and cruised slowly downward, keeping his eyes on the terrain ahead. There were ridges and walls of dark evil-looking rock which would mean disaster if he should land and skid into them. He pressed a button and lowered his retractable land-

ing gear. It dropped noiselessly into place for there was no external air and thus no sound waves to report its operation.

Diana and Wilbur could only look on, helplessly and prayerfully, hoping that Gill might select the right moment and the right spot to bring the great ship in.

"We're skimming the surface now," Wilbur managed in the microphone. "We're going to make contact any second . . . It looks awfully rough . . . we're almost touching . . . here we go . . .!"

There was a jarring impact and a sliding sensation. The landscape reeled crazily. There was a ripping, rending sound in the cabin, then the steel monster rocked to a standstill.

"We're down!" reported Wilbur, excitedly. "*We made it!* . . . Just a minute! . . . Something's happened! . . . I think we've been damaged . . . something's wrong . . . it looks like—yes, a window's broken . . .!"

"*Our oxygen!*" cried Gil. "It's escaping! . . . Quick—I need help!"

CHAPTER VII

THE human creatures on planet Earth had palpitation of the heart. The sudden cessation of broadcasting from the space rocket, "Goodbye, World!" immediately after the crash landing on the moon left everyone, everywhere, in a state of agonized suspense. Those witnessing the space ship's approach to the moon and actual descent on the screens of their television sets were even more excited. Whatever the damage sustained in landing, the television equipment had not been put off of commission.

An enormous and enthralled crowd in Times Square, New York, and other big centers of population throughout

the world where mammoth outdoor television screens had been set up, stood speechless with awe and fear. Before them, on the television screen, was the image of a great, jagged wall of rock which seemed to be but a short distance from the now motionless rocket ship.

A radio announcer's voice broke in. "Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, we have temporarily lost contact with the first space travelers to the moon but we're switching you to Los Angeles where Professor Crowley, who was to have accompanied Gil Benson on his flight, is standing by in our studios to comment on the progress made. Professor Crowley will tell us what he thinks has happened . . . Professor Crowley . . .!"

"Ladies and gentlemen," spoke the Professor's voice. "If a window in the space ship has been broken, this is extremely serious. The oxygen in the cabin, depending on how big an opening has been made, would naturally escape and since there is no atmosphere on the moon, Gil Benson and his two passengers could not long survive.

"Their salvation would depend upon the speed with which they can effect repairs. I doubt very much if they were wearing the space suits on board when they landed as they are cumbersome and designed primarily for use on the moon, outside the rocket.

"These space suits carry their own oxygen supply. They may be electrically heated to withstand the cold of the lunar night and they are lead-coated to repulse the destructive cosmic and other rays which would be fatal to human life. Their outer covering is shimmering bright to deflect the sun's rays during the lunar day which would otherwise produce unbearable heat.

"It would be the greatest possible tragedy if, after having made such a magnificent journey and landing alive

on the moon, Gil Benson and his two unexpected passengers should be prevented, by this accident, from exploring the moon and bringing back to us on earth their first-hand account.

"I'm hoping and praying, as I know you all are, that radio communication will soon be restored and we will learn that they have surmounted this great danger as they have all others thus far."

All work had stopped at M.G.M.'s studio. The stars and executives were gathered around their own radio and television sets. Ruth Delano was among them.

"What do *you* think?" her director, Don Stevens, asked her

Ruth shook her head. "I don't know. Gil's luck's bound to run out some time. If he only had his two skilled men with him! That red-head and 'Wee Willie Wilbur' are worse than no one at all!"

"Wilbur's not been doing so badly for an amateur broadcaster," said Director Stevens.

"Anybody would sound good in a situation like that," said M.G.M.'s pin-up star. "He's in such a dramatic spot, he could recite the alphabet and sound terrific!"

"You sound slightly prejudiced against him," kidded her director.

"I know 'Wee Willie Wilbur,'" said Ruth, "and just because he's gone to the moon doesn't make him a bigger shot in my eyes!"

Director Don Stevens laughed. "How about Miss Fenimore?" he asked.

"Don't mention her!" said Ruth. "Gil wouldn't be in the spot he is now if it wasn't for *that dame!*"

"You're just jealous," teased her director. "You'd like to be up there yourself."

"**C**UT it out!" said Ruth. "I never got a chance to beg Gil not to make this trip. I had a premonition he'd

never get back . . . and I couldn't even reach the poor guy. But that red-head managed somehow. She worked on Wilbur Williams to do it. If they *should* make it back, I've got a score to settle with her!"

At Schenectady, New York, radio operator Carl Mack of Experimental Station G.E., tried desperately to raise Station M-O-O-N on space rocket, "Goodbye, World!". He was having no success.

"Their transmitter still seems to be open and functioning," he reported to anxious G.E. executives and scientists. "I can hear occasional noises as though there is some sort of struggle going on in the cabin. I'm almost certain there's still life there but they must be having a harrowing time!"

"It's pretty weird sitting here, looking at that stationary television image," said one of the executives, "and feeling that you're almost there on the moon yourself—and yet not able to help those poor devils in the ship."

"It's twenty minutes now since our last word," said Carl Mack. "I'm sure they'd get back on the air as soon as they could. They know we must be just about dying down here, too. It begins to look very serious."

G.E.'s high frequency operator began sending again.

"Calling station M-O-O-N! . . . Space rocket, 'Goodbye, World!' . . . Gil Benson . . . Come in if you can . . . Gil Benson!"

* * *

Gil Benson's first move, in this direst emergency was toward the store-room which contained the rocket supplies. He came hurrying back with strips of rubberized sheeting and called on Diana and Wilbur to help him.

The pressurized air in the cabin was

rushing out the cabin window.

The three took firm hold of the rubberized sheeting and spread it over the gaping aperture. It took dangerously vital minutes to get it properly in place. When they did, the pressure of the out-rushing air held the patch in position but the loss of Helium-oxygen had, even so, been extensive.

All three occupants of the space ship were gasping for breath. The air pressure had dropped to almost half of normal.

"We're in for it!" said Gil, his head reeling.

The drop in air pressure had decompressed them too quickly, and a violent reaction set in. Diana and Wilbur were equally affected as they slumped to the floor, twisting and turning in agony.

Gil fought his way back to the instrument board and turned the dial controlling the production and supply of helium-oxygen, on "*full*." As he did so, he doubled up himself. There was nothing that any of them could do for each other. They had to lie there and sweat it out, not knowing whether any of them would survive the ordeal.

"How long . . . is this . . . apt to last?" moaned Wilbur.

"Sometimes . . . four . . . or five hours," Gil managed. "*Hang on!*"

* * *

It was four hours since any word had been heard from Gil Benson's moon rocket. Newspapers were out with great streaming headlines, declaring that America's intrepid pioneer explorer of space and his two companions were feared lost. It was conjectured that the damage sustained in landing had quickly exhausted their oxygen supply and all had succumbed.

Editorial writers bemoaned the untimely end of such an amazingly suc-

cessful moon voyage and confidently predicted that Gil Benson had blazed a trail which would soon be followed by establishment of regular scheduled space routes to the moon.

Ironically enough, the television receiver still carried the continuously broadcast image of the lunar landscape which quite possibly had now become Gil Benson's last resting place. Since all equipment on board was operated by atomic power it was likely that this image would remain visible for an indefinite period of time.

* * *

Gil Benson was first to recover sufficiently to be able to drag himself to the others. He removed their heavy steel-soled shoes and helped them crawl to bunks where they could make themselves more comfortable.

"The worst is over," he said, putting forth a great effort to reassure them. "You'll be all right in a little while."

Diana and Wilbur watched soberly as Gil, gaining more strength, took a step toward the control board. He had removed his own shoes and was in his stocking feet. His lightness of weight and the weakness of gravity on the moon combined to carry him, in this one step, to the very front of the cabin. In fact, Gil bumped against it as his feet again touched the floor.

Diana and Wilbur, following him with their eyes, were astounded.

"You'll have to be careful when you move around," Gil cautioned. "You'll travel six times as far every step you take. I should have remembered that."

He shuffled himself over, very carefully, in front of the microphone.

"This is Gil Benson," he said. "Hello, Mack . . . are you there?" He switched on the receiver and waited.

In came a booming voice. "Yes, Ben-

son! For God's sake—are you all right?"

"Just coming out of it . . . we lost a lot of air. It was pretty bad for a while . . ."

"How about the damage?"

"Broken window," Gil reported. "Bad oxygen leak. Temporarily repaired. There may be other damage but I haven't been able to look around the ship. I think we're pretty well banged up outside. I can't tell about that until we can get out and have a look."

"Thank heaven you're still there!" boomed Mack's voice. "That's great news back here on earth! Keep in touch, old man, if you possibly can . . . I don't want to put through another siege like this . . .!"

"Sorry, Mack," Gil repeated. "I'll try to do better in the future. Got to get some rest . . . Goodbye now!"

Gil turned and eyed his own bunk across the cabin. He calculated carefully and took a short step, landing right beside it.

"Good going," said Wilbur, weakly.

"Oh, boy!" said Gil, and stretched himself out. "*So we're on the moon!* . . . Well, to hell with it!"

He dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

IT WAS six o'clock in the evening, Arizona time, when Gil Benson awoke with a start. Wilbur was standing beside his bunk, shaking him. He looked up, dazedly.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"You're on the moon, you darn fool!" said Wilbur. "But you were yelling for help. What was the idea?"

Gil Benson grinned. "I was being chased!" he said.

"What by?" asked Wilbur.

"Beautiful women," said Gil. "There

were hundreds of them—and they all wanted to *kiss* me!”

“But they didn’t catch you,” called Diana, from her bunk across the cabin. “I don’t see any lipstick.”

“I risked my life getting over to you,” said Wilbur. “I was asleep when you yelled, forgot where I was, jumped up, and hit the ceiling!”

Gil laughed as he stood up. “We’ll have to get used to walking around here. Since our bodies only weigh one-sixth of what they did on earth, it requires very little exertion to lift them.” He looked at his wrist watch. “Here’s something funny! The sun will be setting in Arizona in an hour or so, but we’ll have about six more earth days of sunlight here—and it’s a good thing. It will give us a chance to get around and explore the moon’s surface to see whether or not it really is a dead planet.”

“It’s not any more,” quipped Wilbur. “*We’re* here!”

Diana sat up. “Yes, and if you two feel like *I* do, *we’re* good and hungry!”

Gil smiled. “Well, we ought to be able to enjoy a real meal this time. Our first dinner on the moon! And we should eat it in style.” He looked toward the pantry entrance, then took a step. His body left the floor and he landed easily within a foot of the doorway.

“Come on, you two!” he said. “It’s sport! You might as well get accustomed to it.”

Diana and Wilbur followed him. They looked like young birds trying their wings. Both piled up against the wall of the cabin. As they picked themselves off the floor, the energy exerted shot them into the air. Gil, watching from the doorway, laughed at their acrobatics.

“Wait till we get outside,” he said. “We’ll have a track meet and see who

can jump the highest!”

He went into the store-room, presently passing out a card table and folding chairs for them to set up in the cabin. Then he produced a variety of canned foods—the usual well advertised brands.

“Ye Gods!” said Wilbur. “What have you got here? Don’t tell me—oh, no! Is that *Spam*?”

“That’s *Spam*,” said Gil, handing the cans to Diana who made a half step, landed in the center of the cabin, and set them on the table.

“Well, how do you like that?” griped Wilbur. “I come all the way to the moon to get *Spam*! I might as well have re-enlisted in the Army!”

“You’re going to think you *did*!” said Gil, handing him three Army plates, cups, knives, forks, spoons and a can opener. “Give these to Diana.”

GIL then turned to the water tank and drew a pitcher full of the cooled liquid which ran out with excessive slowness. Seated around the table, the three pioneer space travelers eyed one another and laughed.

“This could be a picnic in the country,” said Diana. “But not one prepared by a woman! Every man, if left to his own devices, always eats out of cans.”

Gil was applying the can opener to good effect, opening up sweet potatoes, spinach, beets, peaches—and Wilbur’s delectable dish “*Spam*”!

“Even the man in the moon ought to go for this,” said Gil. “All right, Diana, how about serving us?”

“Delighted!” said Wilbur’s red-head. The three of them made a picture, two men still in evening dress, somewhat ruffled, and the girl in evening gown with the bright red hair and big blue eyes, doling out equal portions of food to them. The trio ate with relish

and fell into an excited discussion of the events experienced on what now seemed to have been a dream trip through space.

"It just doesn't seem possible we're actually here," said Wilbur, looking out the windows at the dark lunar rocks which loomed not far from the ship. "Good gosh," he said. "I guess that television set has been operating all this time!"

"It won't hurt anything," said Gil. "We fortunately have ample power—but I'm wondering if they're still getting the image on earth?"

"I'll find out," said Wilbur. He got up from the table, took a step and sailed against the instrument board. "If I'm not careful," he said, "I'll knock myself out!"

Diana and Gil laughed. Wilbur turned to the transmitter.

"This is Station M-O-O-N calling Experimental Station G.E. Schenectady . . . Wilbur Williams speaking . . . Come in! . . . Over!"

He switched on the receiver. A new voice boomed out.

"This is Experimental Station G.E. Schenectady . . . Fred Denny speaking . . . I'm relieving Carl Mack . . . How are things up there?"

"Swell!" said Wilbur. "We've just had our first meal on the moon . . . Spam never tasted so good . . . Everybody's rested . . . feeling fine. We haven't been outside yet so we haven't seen any more than you're seeing now, if you're still getting our television image."

"We're still getting it," reported the G.E. operator.

Wilbur snapped off the television set. "Well, you're not getting it now," he said.

"No," laughed Fred Denny. "It just disappeared from the screen. That's pretty quick work. Certainly demon-

strates how fast the image travels between the moon and the earth!"

"You must have gotten tired of that scene," said Wilbur. "We'll try to get you some new ones a little later."

"We have a message here for Gil Benson," said Fred Denny. "Professor Crowley wants to know the extent of damage—whether you've carried enough plastic glass for replacement of windows broken."

"How about that, Gil?" asked Wilbur.

Gil judged his distance and stepped lightly to the microphone. "Better let me answer! . . . This is Gil Benson . . . Tell Professor Crowley I haven't made real survey of damage as yet. I'll give him a complete report later. Ask him to check with Army rocket headquarters at White Sands, New Mexico, and find out if they are far enough along with their experiments to attempt shooting us a radar-controlled rocket containing repair parts, if we need them."

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "I hope we don't!"

"Okay, Benson," said Fred Denny's voice from earth. "Will do!"

"Thanks, old man," replied Gil. "It's just possible that we might contact such a rocket with our own Army radar equipment and take over its control when it enters the moon's gravitational field. Have Professor Crowley get me the dope on this, just in case. That's all for now."

"Right you are," said Denny. "I'll have the information for you next time you contact. Good luck!"

GIL switched off the radio.

"Good night!" said Wilbur. "There's not any doubt about our getting back okay, is there?"

"On a trip of this kind," said Gil, "there's always plenty of doubt until

you get back!"

Diana smiled. "That doesn't worry me," she said. "Now that I've got something on my stomach." She busied herself with clearing the table, making cautious steps to and from the galley. Wilbur knocked the table down and folded the chairs. He made a grotesque figure, loping through the air.

"I don't think I'll ever get the hang of this," he said.

Gil, who had been studying the small area of lunar landscape which could be seen through the windows, now turned to his two companions.

"Well, we might as well know the worst," he said. "It's time we were getting outside and seeing what happened to our rocket. Come on. Take off your evening clothes, put on these slacks and I'll help you into your space suit."

He crossed over to the store-room alcove where the moon suits were hanging and dragged them out carefully, laying them side by side on the cabin floor. They were heavy and contained much equipment.

"Here's what you need to know about these suits," said Gil. "They weighed around six hundred pounds on earth. I couldn't even lift one of them there. But they're only one sixth as heavy here. You'll be able to navigate in them easily."

"*Navigate* sounds like the right word," said Diana, eyeing the suits apprehensively.

"They carry their own power plant and electric generator," Gil pointed out. "It operates on sun power in the daytime and storage battery during the lunar night. Here it is here . . . and this is the air conditioning plant. It reprocesses the air you breathe and puts it back into circulation after mixing it with fresh oxygen. This is the suit's lighting system, both internal and ex-

ternal . . . Here's the cooling and heating equipment . . . this is the radio and radar apparatus . . . Here's the place your food is stored for long exploration trips . . . These motors and controls are to help move arms and fingers . . . I'll have to show you how to work all these gadgets . . . !"

"I'll say you will!" said Wilbur. "That suit looks too complicated for me. I'm afraid to get in the darn thing without a *can opener*!"

DRESSED to step out upon the surface of the moon, earth's three space travelers made a strange appearing sight. Before clamping down their head-pieces and starting the flow of liquid oxygen which they were to breathe while encased in this little air world of their own, Gil produced an American flag on a pointed metal staff and said: "Our first act, when we get out on the moon will be to lay claim to it in the name of the United States of America."

"That's a thrill," said Wilbur. "This ought to make pikers out of the discoverers of the North and South poles. But, say, Gil—how about leaving me the *cheese concession*?"

"Shut up!" said Gil. "This is a solemn occasion. Listen while I give you two a few instructions. The weight of our suits is so great that they'll hold us down so we can walk about, almost as we do on earth. Remember, there's no atmosphere on the moon, so don't expect to hear any sounds. We can talk to each other, of course, by walkie talkie . . . I guess that's all—except we'll have to leave the ship through this special air lock compartment, so the oxygen supply in the cabin won't be affected as we go in and out . . . Now—which one of you wants the *honor* of being the first to actually set foot on the moon?"

Diana and Wilbur looked at one another.

"That's a *real* honor," said Hollywood's greatest press agent. "The one who does that will go down in history!"

"And that honor belongs to one person," said Diana. "*Gil Benson!*"

"You said it!" echoed Wilbur. "The only honor *I* want is to be the first to set foot on *earth* again!"

Gil laughed. "Too bad we can't cover this by television," he said, "but we don't have enough skilled hands to maneuver the equipment. We'll just have to take motion pictures!"

"And I'll do the shooting!" volunteered Wilbur. "I'm the best picture-taker of bathing beauties in Hollywood!"

"Well, you'll snap some forms here never seen before," said Gil, handing Wilbur the compact movie camera.

"Boy, I've got a great idea!" said Wilbur. "We'll make Diana the first pin-up girl on the moon!"

"You stick to the flag-raising ceremony and forget Diana," advised the red-head. "Gil is the star of this event!"

They stepped into the air lock compartment and closed the inner door behind them. Gil slid the heavy metal outer door open and shoved out a metal ladder, making contact with the ground, about ten feet below.

He turned and backed out in his cumbersome space suit, feeling one foot at a time for each rung of the ladder beneath him. Diana followed as soon as Gil was clear of the doorway. Wilbur then swung onto the ladder, tripped, and almost fell on her.

"Look out below!" he called. "If I land on you with all this plumbing, it'll be 'Goodbye, Baby!'"

Reaching the moon's surface, the three stood in a little group and looked around.

The "Goodbye, World!" lay with its

retractable landing gear smashed, its under belly sunk deep in this fine pumice or volcanic dust which heavily coated everything within sight. It looked as though it had lain undisturbed for ages. Beneath it was blank, wrinkled, rugged rock which appeared to have been formed originally by lava. This same rock rose above the volcanic ash in fantastic walls and jagged peaks which cast the blackest of black shadows and gave an uncanny effect to the whole weird landscape.

THE space ship looked strangely real and life-like against this dead background, resembling a great wounded bird which had fallen in flight. Its dark side was tilted toward the moon's surface with the bright side exposed to the merciless rays of the sun which beat down through airless space with unrestrained fury. Had not the carefully designed bright-coated suits of the space travelers been conditioned against this relentless heat, they could not have survived even momentary exposure.

At a gesture from Gil, all dropped the shield of dark glass across the window in their headgear and looked toward the sun. It was a frightening spectacle—gigantic shafts of flame in a state of unimaginable gaseous violent turbulence, shining out from a jet black heaven!

Directing their gaze away from this mighty furnace in the sky, they now beheld the earth from which they had departed about nineteen hours ago.

"Just look at that!" Wilbur exclaimed, his voice being heard by Diana and Gil on their walkie-talkie sets.

The planet of their birth was a tremendous half-moon, eighty times more luminous than the satellite they were on and four times its size. Even as they gazed at it, earth's continents seemed

to be swimming slowly across its face, from left to right, in the direction of its rotation. Cloud formations, hovering over parts of the earth, appeared as bright spots and bodies of water shone with dazzling brilliance.

"What a sight!" cried Diana. "I guess you have to be off the old earth to really appreciate it!"

"When it gets full," said Gil, "it should give us a complete geography lesson. It's still hard to realize that we're looking at the *real* globe of the world!"

It was fascinating and, at the same time startling, to contemplate these new perspectives and new points of view growing out of them. Here was a unique place of vantage which afforded unrivaled observation of the universe, with sun and stars simultaneously visible in the black corridors of space, and shining with indescribable brightness because there were no dust particles to deflect or absorb light.

"The moon will be headquarters for the astronomers of the future," said Gil. "All scientists and research men will want to conduct their tests from here. I can just imagine how Professor Crowley would be raving if he were with us!"

"Please don't bring that up," said Diana. "It makes me feel miserable."

Gil looked about him, then turned to Wilbur.

"Where do you think we should hold this little ceremony?" he asked.

"Well," said Wilbur, "we might as well apply Hollywood technique and look for the best camera angle. I think you should walk out here far enough so we can get your whole space ship in the background."

"About here?" asked Gil.

Wilbur sighted professionally through the finder of his movie camera, held at the level of his eyes.

"That's swell," he said. "Just right. Sorry we can't get this in sound but you say whatever you think is appropriate and we'll dub in your voice later."

"Okay," said Gil, "Are you ready?"

"Just a minute!" directed Wilbur. "We've got to make this dramatic!"

"**WE'RE** on the moon," said Diana. "Isn't that dramatic enough?"

"No," said Wilbur. "We've got to get the proper sequence. Gil, you step off to one side and let me try to get a shot at the earth, spinning away, up there. I think it's plenty bright enough to photograph. Then I'll pan down here on this gorgeously desolate moon landscape and come in on a shot of the rocket, lying there like a great, fallen albatross. This sets the stage for the entrance of the hero—the first man on the moon! . . . Too bad we don't have some 'Pomp and Circumstance' music blending in with the 'Stars and Stripes Forever!' . . . Don't forget this when we dub in the sound . . . It'll be terrific! . . . Then you come marching in! . . . Plant the flag, make your spiel, take a bow and stand at attention as we finish with the 'Star Spangled Banner' . . . Brother, that's *drama*!"

"All right," said Gil, "let's get it over with!"

Diana took her stand beside Wilbur to watch this unique movie shot. He raised the camera in position, pointed it at the luminous half moon of earth and started shooting. When it came time for Gil Benson's big moment, Wilbur called out: "Okay, Gil—do your stuff!"

America's Number One Playboy, unrecognizable now in this new and spectacular role, lumbered into camera range and jabbed the American flag in a rock crevice. Its folds hung limp because, with no air on the moon there was, of course, no breeze—and Gil, to show the flag, took hold of its upper

corner, spreading it momentarily to view.

As he did so, he said: "I, Gil Benson, from the planet, Earth, of the State of Arizona, the United States of America, on this day, as the first man from my planet to set foot on our satellite, do hereby lay claim to the moon and all its possessions in the name of my sovereign country!"

"Bravo!" cried Diana.

"That was great, Gil, old boy!" said Wilbur. "Hollywood will love this!"

Gil left the flag in place and came toward them. "Of course this little ceremony is just for the record," he said. "I'll have to file an official claim when we get back to earth. But it gives you quite a thrill, at that, to think of planting Old Glory up here?"

"Cut it out!" said Wilbur, "you're making me homesick!"

Gil turned and looked toward their space ship.

"Speaking of home," he said. "We'd better see what our chances are of *getting* home!"

He led the way in an encirclement of the rocket, examining such damage as had been done with minute care, and satisfying himself that the shell of the rocket was intact. In addition to the crushed landing gear, he found that another section of the plastic glass windows was badly cracked, necessitating replacement. It was not a comfortable feeling to think that breakage of any of these windows while shooting through space might quickly destroy the oxygen content of the cabin and result in their annihilation.

"I can see now," said Gil, "that I slipped up in not bringing enough window replacements with me. I'd hate to have to attempt the return journey with that badly cracked and weakened window surface."

"Maybe we'd better stay on here,"

said Wilbur. "How long will our food supply last?"

Gil laughed. "About two months, with rationing."

"Well," said Wilbur, "someone else is bound to be up from earth eventually. Maybe we can hitch-hike a ride back with them!"

"You get some of the cutest ideas!" said Diana.

"I got here *alive*," said Wilbur, "and I don't want to go back *dead*!"

GIL'S attention was now being directed to the lunar landscape.

"How about a little overland jaunt?" he proposed. "I'd like to see some of this moon country."

"It all looks the same to me," said Wilbur. "It would sure make one terrific golf course! What hazards! Oh, boy!"

He pointed to a succession of craters, big and small, inter-locking one another with prodigious rock walls and ridges and cracks in the moon's surface in and around them.

They started walking over and about some of the peculiar formations, looking back at intervals to keep their bearings and glimpse their glittering space ship.

"I think we've done all the exploring we should do, our first time out," Gil decided, after a half hour's slow going. "I'm not sure, even with these protective suits, that we should risk being exposed to the sun much longer, till we know whether or not there'll be any effect. So I'm for returning to the rocket and starting out again tomorrow morning, Arizona time!"

"You're the boss!" said Wilbur.

The trio turned back toward the location of their space ship.

"Besides," said Gil, "we should never all of us get out of sight of our rocket home. On any long trip, either you or

Diana will have to stay with the ship to guide me back, if I lose my bearings."

"If you lose your bearings," said Wilbur, "I'll lose my mind; Don't talk like that!"

CHAPTER IX

AT ITS base on the White Sands Proving Ground, in the desert of New Mexico, the United States Army's moon rocket was poised for its take-off.

Gil Benson's voice was coming in by high frequency radio.

"When do you estimate your rocket will reach the field of the moon's influence?" he was asking.

"Around forty-three hours and twelve minutes after take-off," replied Captain Bruce Elder, Army engineer.

"Then we should be prepared to take over control about that time?"

"Right. We'll follow the rocket's flight and keep you advised. The plastic glass is carefully packed. It should come through unless the rocket is badly damaged."

"Okay. Thanks very much. We're standing by."

With all in readiness for the launching, Professor Crowley withdrew from the rocket site to the radio car where he could watch the take-off and communicate with the "man on the target."

"Check your watch, Gil," said the Professor. "It's Wednesday, two-fifteen here. Ten seconds. Count them off!"

Lt. Col. Harvey had alerted his men assigned to starting the rocket motors and sending the jet-propelled missile on its emergency mission into space.

At a signal from him, the switch was thrown igniting the fuel of liquid oxygen and alcohol. The Army rocket rose slowly from its base as though pulled upward by invisible wires. Then, as it seemed to hang heavily in air—with the

fuel fully applied, it took off with a great SWOOSH! in a cloud of dust, smoke and flame, giving forth a thunderous noise.

"There she goes!" cried Professor Crowley. "She's on the way, Gil!"

"I could hear it leave!" Gil reported from the moon. "That's great! I'll be looking for it!"

"It's a wonderful sight from here," continued Professor Crowley. "It's accelerating at a tremendous rate, trailing a long tail of white flame and smoke. Captain Elder tells me it's up nineteen miles already . . . thirty . . . sixty . . . while I'm talking! . . . It's making a speed of eight thousand, four hundred feet per second . . . now it's being stepped up . . . all I can see is a white vapor trail . . . it's thinning out and disappearing . . . the rocket's reached the stratosphere . . . it's hitting a velocity of three miles a second . . . that's not good enough as you know . . . can't get away from the earth on that . . . here's the third step . . . let's see what happens . . . four—five—yes, it's jumped to *seven*! . . . Gil—it's out there in space—it's beyond the earth's gravitational pull . . . it's a free projectile now . . . they're cutting off the motors . . . it's coasting toward you . . . if they can keep it on course, it should make it! . . . Here's hoping!"

"You said it!" came Gil's voice, from the moon. "Nothing for us to do now but wait. I think I'll go out and see what I can of our surroundings, while I'm putting in time."

Professor Crowley laughed, excitedly. "Wish to hell I was with you!"

"I wish to hell you were, too!" said Gil. "I may be an explorer, but I'm no scientist!"

WITH the Army's relief rocket on the way to them, the three moon

occupants could now relax and give their attention to other matters of absorbing interest close at hand.

"Wilbur," said Gil, "I'm sorry, but you're elected to stay here and keep in touch with earth by radio—and also with us on the walkie-talkie, in case we need to make contact. Diana and I are going on a little cross country hike."

"That's ducky!" said Wilbur. "I come all the way to the moon and I don't see anything but Diana and you and the space ship!"

"Why, Wilbur!" said Diana. "Are you tired of looking at me?"

"You're still beautiful, Baby," said Wilbur, "but now that I'm on the moon, I don't feel so romantic."

"You can see all the sights next trip," said Gil.

"There isn't going to be any next trip," said Wilbur. "If I once get back to the earth I'm going to chain myself to it!"

Diana and Gil laughed as they climbed into their heavy moon suits. Once inside, they continued the conversation by walkie-talkie.

"Goodbye, Wilbur," said Gil. "Don't look so lonely and deserted. We'll give you a running description of what we're seeing and you can pass it on to Earth!"

"Okay," said Wilbur. "But I think this is just a frame-up to get you and Diana off by yourselves." He shook a warning finger at them. "I don't want any more of this *kissing!*"

Diana and Gil looked at one another through the glass windows of their bright metal helmets, with their funny rubberized oxygen noses attached to a tank in front. Then they both howled.

"We don't need a chaperone in these things," said Gil.

"A girl could die an old maid in here," said Diana.

They crossed the cabin to the air lock compartment, lifted ponderous

arms to wave Wilbur "goodbye" and stepped inside, closing the door. Hollywood's greatest press agent watched them depart through the window and then returned to keep vigil by the radio set.

"I didn't do myself so much good when I introduced her to Gil," he said to himself. "She's giving me about as much attention as an agent usually gets—*ten per cent!*"

* * *

As nearly as Gil could determine, he and Diana were about ten miles from their "home base" in a westerly direction, figured from the sun's position. They had traveled up steep inclines and down into deep recesses, keeping in the black shadow of walls and ridges as much as possible, to escape the almost blinding sunlight. But now they found themselves within a mile of a great crater. Gazing up the rough rock slope which extended to the crater's rim, Gil cried out in excitement:

"Look, Diana—see these bright streaks in the ground? . . . Running down the sides of this slope, from the crater's edge?"

"Yes," said Diana. "It hurts my eyes to look at them. What are they?"

"They're one of astronomy's mysteries!" said Gil. "As seen from earth they extend in straight lines of great brilliance, in all directions from hundreds of different centers—like spokes in a wheel!"

"They look like a lot of quicksilver that's been heated and run out from one spot—and frozen all over!" said Diana.

"It's not that," said Gil. "And it's not a stain on the under rock surface. It's a substance of some sort! . . . Just see how these lines extend! . . . They aren't broken by any of the land-

scape! Our astronomers call these streaks 'rays'! . . . Some think they were caused by gases produced by volcanoes. Others think they were brought about by action of meteors. It looks to me like they resulted from a white hot explosion as meteors hit the moon's surface and formed these craters.

"Could be!" said Diana. "They're sure splattered in every direction!"

Gil knelt and examined a raised vein of bright material which was fused into the rock surface beneath. Several fragments were lying loose. These he retrieved to take back to earth as samples.

"You know what, Diana! I know just enough about minerals to hazard a guess . . . this stuff is what Earth scientists would give their right eye for—it's URANIUM!"

"Uranium!" Diana repeated.

"Yes . . . I'm sure of it!" said Gil. "I've seen pieces of uranium before. This nickel-white metal you see on all sides is the material that atomic scientists have been using to explode their atomic bombs—it's what's needed to create new power for heat, light and industry. And, if all these streaks are composed of the same material, then the moon is *loaded* with it. *Absolutely loaded!*"

"Hey!" cut in Wilbur, from the space ship. "Are you kidding?"

"I'll say I'm not kidding!" replied Gil. "This moon's a gold mine! It's so fabulous I don't dare think of it! Here's all the power the earth will ever need—*forever!* But, say—if the wrong people get up here and get hold of it—it would be just too bad! . . . They could build their own reacting atomic 'piles' on the moon—put them in rockets and bombard any country on earth! . . . The United States Army had better get up here quick—and take over! . . . We've got to gain control of the moon for our own protection from any pos-

sible enemy force on our planet! . . . And we can't waste any time doing it!"

"Shall I pass this news on to Schenectady?" asked Wilbur.

"I should say not!" said Gil. "Not a word to Earth about this! It's too hot to broadcast! . . . We'll have to wait and trust to luck on our getting back—so I can personally put this knowledge in the proper hands!"

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "What next?"

"Dinner!" said Gil. "We'll be back in two and a half hours. Have the table set and the food laid out!"

"Okay," said Wilbur, "but you hand me a few more shockers like this—and you'll find *me* laid out!"

THE Army radar-guided rocket dispatched from earth forty-three hours ago, was now nearing the moon's gravitational field. In the space ship, "Goodbye, World!" the atmosphere was once more tense. Gil Benson, intent on operation of his Army radar set, sat alert and expectant. Diana and Wilbur held their breaths.

"Have you made contact?" asked Captain Elder's voice from earth.

"Yes!" said Gil.

"Are you ready to take over control?"

"Ready!"

"Count off and take over on ten!"

The count started. At "ten," Gil set his dials and watched the radar screen. A look of exultation crossed his face.

"We've got it!" he announced.

"Good!" said Captain Elder's voice. "Here's hoping you bring her in okay! We're all pulling for you!"

"Thanks," said Gil, grimly.

It would be almost five hours yet before the rocket would arrive and this time must be spent in exacting concentration.

"Don't lose that Baby now!" said

Wilbur. "I want to get back to earth!"

* * *

"It won't be long now," Gil announced at 3:05 p.m. Friday, Arizona time, forty-eight hours and forty minutes after the Army rocket had left earth.

"I'm going to try to bring her in for a landing this trip!"

He had twice caused the rocket to circle a prescribed area at the height of about a mile overhead, as a test of his control.

"Don't bring it in on top of us!" warned Wilbur. "Pick a nice soft spot about a mile away!"

"Show me a soft spot on the whole moon!" said Gil. "Let's hope she comes in at an angle so she's not too badly broken up!"

"I'm praying!" said Wilbur, "but don't count on it!"

Diana stood near the temporary rubberized covering of the broken window.

"I'm too numb to pray," she said. "But I've got my fingers and toes crossed!"

"Here she comes!" Gil cried.

They watched the radar screen in anxious fascination.

"She's down!" he said. "About a half mile from here! . . . Stand by the radio, Wilbur . . . Diana and I are going out to see what's happened!"

CHAPTER X

IT WAS tremendous news on earth when word came through from the moon that the Army's radar controlled rocket had landed safely. The peoples of the world were thrilled at the thought that it was not only possible for a man-carrying space ship to reach the moon but that also a cargo of repair parts

could be jet propelled after it. The intimations for the future of interspatial travel, with the moon established as a taking off point for other planets, were exciting beyond description. In a few years, it was freely predicted, humans would be colonizing on the moon and going there on week-end excursions!

Even M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation indicated that she might make such a trip in company, of course, with Gil Benson.

"I wouldn't trust myself with anyone else," she said, which was her way of paying tribute.

On Sunday night, Arizona time, with the three space travelers about to round out their first full week on the moon, Gil Benson reported, through G.E.'s Experimental Station at Schenectady, that he had completed all possible repairs. The new plastic glass windows were in place and the crushed landing gear had been stripped from the ship.

"When we get back to earth," said Gil, "we'll have to come in for a belly landing—but I think we can make it."

Monday morning, Arizona time, an earthly event stole the front page headlines, for the first time, from Gil Benson's moon adventure. The peoples of the world had their minds forcibly brought back from inter-stellar space to face the shocking and imminent possibility of a Third World War! They stared in horror and dismay at these smashing lines:

WAR WITH RUSSIA INEVITABLE!

**May Come At Any Moment
All Countries Prepared to Meet
Devastating Undeclared Attack!**

Fiery opening paragraphs set forth the explosive situation.

Relations between Great Britain and the United States and Russia have reached the breaking point.

Europe is ablaze with hatred, revolt, intrigue and countless violent border incidents. The tinder-box of the Balkans needs only one

final spark to touch off a war for which the new alignments of Eastern and Western powers have been feverishly and openly preparing.

There is no longer any question that this war can be averted. The only question is—at what moment will it come?

A state of national emergency has been declared in countries throughout the world, and in England and the United States plans are being rushed for evacuation of big centers of population in anticipation of a rain of death from the skies.

This conflict, which, admittedly, may bring the absolute end of civilization, is being precipitated through the utter failure of the world's diplomats and the delegates of the United Nations Organization to effect a peaceful settlement and adjustment of powerful national differences in economy and ideology.

The Congress of the United States is meeting in special session to draft legislation necessary to putting the country on an immediate overnight, full war-time footing.

It is understood that the Army and Navy air forces are standing by with their long range bombers and rockets prepared to launch an atom bomb attack at the first real outbreak of hostilities. . . .

RADIO Operator Carl Mack, in contact with Gil Benson on the moon, read him these headlines and said: "Better stay up there, old man—*it's soon going to be hell on earth!*"

"Good night!" moaned Hollywood's greatest press agent, "and just after me thinking what a nice safe place the old earth was!"

The end of the lunar day was approaching. In a few more hours of earth time the sun would begin to dip below the western horizon. It would be the first sunset that these pioneer space travelers would see from the moon and it would take about thirty times as long as it had on earth for the upper edge of the sun to disappear for, as Gil had explained, the sun from the moon seems to move only about one-thirtieth as fast.

"This is going to be an interesting spectacle to watch," said Gil. "I'm anxious to get back to earth with this knowledge of extensive uranium deposits but I don't want to leave here until we've experienced part of a night on

the moon and have had a look at the other side."

"Ye Gods!" said Wilbur. "You don't really mean it, Gil! Isn't this side enough for the first trip? Have a heart!"

"I second the motion!" said Diana.

Gil smiled. "Oh, I don't intend to land but we'll stick it out here till the other side of the moon is lit up and then we'll fly around the moon on the way home. I want to take as many pictures as we can of its entire surface. We've already got some swell close-ups of the lines of uranium and the formations around us."

"Gil," said Wilbur, soberly, "as your radio man, photographer, master of ceremonies and general all-around flunky, I'm about to stage *the first strike on the moon!*"

"And I'll walk out with him!" threatened Diana.

Gil grinned. "Go ahead," he said. "Take a walk. If you don't want to go with me, I'll pick you up my next trip."

"*The strike is over!*" said Wilbur.

At Gil's suggestion, Diana and Wilbur donned their space suits and left the rocket to watch the sun as it slowly descended beneath the moon's sawtoothed horizon. It shone with all the splendor of noonday until its lower edges began to disappear. Then its light commenced to grow dimmer but the blackness of the sky remained.

THE three earth visitors could not help but contrast this strange sunset with the settings of this same sun which they had witnessed so many times on their own planet and which had been attended by a magnificent blaze of heavenly reds and golds.

"They wouldn't even give this sunset one star in Hollywood," said Wilbur.

"I agree," said Diana. "It's kind of dismal, if you'd ask me."

There being no air to catch the sunlight, with the last upper edge of the sun now slipping below the horizon, there was no twilight. The instant the sun vanished from view, they were plunged into darkness. And now it was only the mammoth half-luminous body of their own earth above them which cast any light upon the doubly desolate surface of the moon. As they looked upward at their home planet a strange and inexplicable nostalgia seized them. It seemed so near and yet so far away.

"Just an overnight sleeper jump," said Gil, "five years from now."

"Put me to sleep and take me back," said Wilbur. "I don't care if there is another world war! I'd even re-enlist again. What choice have I got? It's certainly better than this, unless you can find another planet where everything is sweetness and light and everybody loves everybody else and they haven't invented gun powder and atomic bombs yet."

"The moon's got you," said Diana. "You've gone loony!"

"If you haven't turned on your heating units," warned Gil, "you'd better do it in a hurry. The temperature's taking a nose dive right now and in a few hours it will be at least *two hundred degrees below zero, Centigrade!*"

"What a place!" said Wilbur. "It beats the cool nights in California. I thought I'd freeze *there*, every time the sun dropped behind the mountains!"

"You and me both," said Diana. "But I'll never complain after this."

"*Look!*" Gil suddenly exclaimed. He pointed in a direction away from the rocket. "*I saw something hit the moon!*"

Even as he spoke, their heavy metal suits were sprayed with a rain of rock particles. They hit with such force as to dent the suits in several places and the air inside their mobile houses

recorded the sound. The surface of the moon shook under their feet.

"It must have been a *meteor!*" cried Gil. "That was a mighty close call!"

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "Let's get out of here!"

"No," said Gil, "let's investigate. I want to see where it hit!"

He turned on his suit's searchlight and pointed it in the direction of the fallen body. "Come on," he said. "Follow me!"

Aided by the bright rays of their searchlights, the three moved away from the vicinity of their space ship, continuing for about a mile in and around and over the rough and uneven terrain. They finally came to a spot giving evidence of new devastation. A thin vapor was rising from a newly formed crater where the huge heavenly cannon ball had landed. It had crushed the moon surface about it into powdered rock and now, under the glare of their searchlights, they could see thousands of meteor fragments spread out in all directions from its awesome point of contact.

Gil stooped and picked up a piece of the meteor in one hand. It was black and jagged, large enough to have weighed a hundred pounds on earth.

"**T**HIS is iron," he said. "Perhaps alloyed with a little nickel. It's terrifically hard. If this meteor had been falling toward our earth, the friction of our atmosphere would have caused it to burn up in space, but here on the moon these shooting stars, with no air to check them, hit the surface. I can see right now that a lot of these craters we've been wondering about have been made by meteors just like this one. Lucky it didn't hit the ship!"

"We'd better get away from here before one does," said Wilbur. "It's even worse at night—you can't see them in

time to dodge!"

"*Dodge!*" said Diana. "How can you dodge when they're going a million miles a second!"

"Not quite that fast," laughed Gil. "But they must be falling somewhere on the moon all the time. If anyone was going to stay up here, he'd have to live in a cave or build underground."

"We might as well go back to Earth and start dodging atom bombs," said Wilbur.

Gil looked down at the large fragment of the meteor he was holding.

"I'm going to take this back to Earth as a specimen," he said. "No doubt many of these craters were also caused by volcanoes now extinct but the surface of the moon has certainly been peppered by ages of meteoric bombardment."

"It makes me feel like ducking my head all the time," said Diana. "I don't think I'm exactly going to enjoy the rest of my time on the moon!"

Gil smiled. "Think of all the countless thunderstorms on earth and how few people are ever struck by lightning."

"But think of the ones who *are!*" said Wilbur. "Come on, Gil. We've stayed long enough. Let's go home!"

Gil shook his head. "It will take more than a meteor to chase me off this moon till I finish up what I want to do," he said. "Let's go back to the rocket and get something to eat."

They turned about and their searchlight beams, unrestricted on the airless moon, struck the glittering surface of a portion of the space ship which was visible.

"Hello, 'Goodbye, World!'" said Wilbur. "I'm going to change your name. It's soon going to be '*Goodbye, Moon!*'"

* * *

The earth was a magnificent full

moon above them as the first three humans to reach the moon prepared for their take-off. They could see it through the plastic glass windows with the outline of the continents standing out as though sculptured in space. The oceans were brilliant flashing gems and the white glistening polar caps sparkled with dancing rainbow halos. It was a sight far more transcendent than the moon had ever looked from earth.

"I can darn near see the lights of Broadway," said Wilbur. "With a good telescope, I'll bet we could even read the electric signs and see what pictures were playing!"

"I wouldn't want to look," said Diana. "If I saw Ruth Delano's name in lights, it would spoil my trip."

Gil laughed. "You girls certainly love each other, don't you?"

"Like sisters," said Diana.

"Never mind," soothed Wilbur. "If you get back to Earth, you'll be bigger than Ruth Delano ever thought of being. They'll wrap up Hollywood and give it to you!"

"I don't want Hollywood!" said Diana—and looked sidewise at Gil.

"**C**UT out that double-talk," said Wilbur. "You hired me to put you over once and I'm going to do it this time. I can't miss. I can see your billing already—'Diana Fenimore, Enthrancing Queen of the Moon, the Original Rocket Girl, the Woman Who Put Sex in Space—the Sweetheart of the Man in the Moon!'"

Diana looked at herself in the cabin mirror.

"You still think I should wear this evening dress back?" she asked.

"Sure thing!" said Wilbur. "It's a terrific gag. We all return to Earth exactly as we left—in *evening dress*. It will make this moon trip seem just like *another premiere*."

Gil Benson stepped before the instrument board and placed his hand on the starting lever.

"Better get on the radio," he said to Wilbur, "and get ready to report our trip." He looked at his wrist watch. "We're leaving here, just two weeks to the day that we departed from Earth. It's Monday at nine a.m. Arizona time . . . have you got Schenectady?"

"Yes," reported Wilbur. "It's just coming in now."

"Hello, up there!" sounded Carl Mack's voice from earth. "Is this the day?"

"It's the day and the minute!" informed Wilbur. "We're just taking off now but Gil wants me to tell you we're not coming straight home. We're going around what you call the dark side of the moon first! Only it's light over there now."

"That's great!" said Carl Mack. "The scientists at G.E. have been hoping Gil would do that."

"And his two passengers have been hoping he *wouldn't*!" said Wilbur. "But *you know* Gil!"

Carl Mack laughed. "You're sunk, Williams. Might as well sit back and enjoy it."

"I'll sit back," said Wilbur, "but I won't enjoy it!"

Gil motioned to Diana and Wilbur.

"I'm starting the atomic rocket motors now," he said. "I'm going to raise this ship horizontally off the moon's surface and ascend to a height of about ten miles, from which altitude I hope to cruise around the moon. This will give us a chance to get excellent photographs and fine observation. Tell Mack I'm not sure how good our radio reception will be on the other side and if he can't get us, not to worry—we'll pick him up again as soon as we come around on the earth-side, once more, and head toward our own planet."

Wilbur passed on this information.

Gil's hand pressed the starting lever down and the atomic power motors hummed inside the cabin. Momentarily, the huge ship trembled like a great bird coming to life. The moon's surface commenced to fall away, looking weird under the reflected light from the ball of earth. Gil then pointed the rocket in a westerly direction, following the course taken by the sun in its setting of just an earth week ago.

"We're making a speed of about fifteen hundred miles an hour," said Gil. "In a little over an hour, we'll be coming into sunlight on the other side of the moon. Then I'm going to slow us down considerably so we can really see what it looks like. This is going to be the most exciting part of the trip to me."

"I can predict right now," said Wilbur, "that the other side will look like a second showing of the same picture. But I'm reconciled. It will only take us a few more hours at the most."

He turned back to the radio and spoke into the microphone.

"Say, Mack—how's the third world war coming, down there?"

THE voice from Earth reached him almost instantly. "Swell! We're getting closer to it every day! Beginning next week, they are starting to evacuate every big industrial and coast city. But that may not be soon enough. The war's apt to be on before you get back!"

"That's lovely!" said Wilbur. Then turning aside: "Gil, did you hear that? . . . Just look up there at that earth of ours! Can you picture those *little insignificant human ants* getting ready to *kill* each other again? . . . If they could only see what a wonderful planet they're living on! . . . How terrific the universe really is! . . . I wonder if it

wouldn't change their whole attitude—or would they just get more greedy than ever—and want to grab off a few extra planets for themselves?"

"You're a member of the human race," said Gil. "*You* answer that one!"

"Well," said Wilbur, "aren't we already trying to grab off the moon? . . . And when we get that, do you think we'll stop there? We'll be shooting through space, establishing trade routes all over the place!"

"Which wouldn't be a bad idea!" said Diana. "And I'd be the first interplanetary saleslady!"

"You should settle down," said Wilbur, "and marry—and stay on one earth—and have children!"

Diana's blue eyes went into action for the first time in a long while.

"I may marry," she said. "But, after this, I refuse to stay on one earth and my children will just have to be born wherever I am at the time!"

"That's bad," said Wilbur. "The poor kids won't know where they are—and they'll be citizens of no place."

"They'll be citizens of the universe," Diana rejoined. "Which ought to be good enough for anybody!"

Wilbur eyed her. "Who's loony now?" he asked.

CHAPTER XI

AS THE space ship sped over the rough-fringed curvature of the moon, the sun burst upon it, almost without warning. Emerging from darkness into daylight was a momentary shock but not half the shock which was occasioned by Wilbur's discovery that the earth was no longer in the sky.

"Hey!" he cried. "Our earth! Where has it gone?"

"It's on the other side of the moon," said Gil. "We're seeing a panorama

right this minute that no earth-bound man ever has seen or can see! So keep your eyes peeled and spot everything you can!"

He turned on the automatic cameras which started making a photographic record.

"It's just as I figured," said Wilbur. "Nothing new or different!"

Traveling at a greatly reduced rate of five hundred miles per hour, excellent observation was possible. The lunar landscape did have a similarity at first but it soon became apparent that it was much more rough and mountainous than the other side. It was still honeycombed with craters of various sizes but these were broken by gigantic towering peaks, many of them looking from the air like the pointed steeples of deserted stone cathedrals.

Diana, surveying this scene, exclaimed: "Talk about the Bad-lands on Earth! They're not in it with this! I'd hate to have to parachute down from here!"

"I'd hate to have you," said Gil. "Since there's no air, the parachute wouldn't open!"

Wilbur, keeping up a running fire conversation with Carl Mack on earth, said: "Thank God for radio! If it wasn't for hearing your voice, I'd think our planet and everything on it had vanished for good. It's the queerest feeling to be completely out of sight of it!"

"Well, we're still here all right," laughed Mack. "But if they begin dropping atomic bombs, you may not have any earth to come back to!"

"Oh, Brother!" said Wilbur, "don't even suggest that!" He glanced through the side windows of the space ship and a sudden strange flash caught his eye. What he saw all but paralyzed him.

"Gil!" he cried. "Oh, my gosh! . . . Look!"

Almost simultaneously there was a similar bright flash on the other side of the ship and Diana, seeing it, cried out: "Oh! For heaven's sake! Oh, Gil!"

Startled, Gil Benson, at the rocket's controls, looked right and left.

"*SPACE ships!*" he exclaimed, unbelievably. "*Mammoth ones!*"

There was a third brilliant flash through the windows in the sky dome above them.

"Three at least!" cried Wilbur. "At each side and above us! We're hemmed in! . . . Ye gods, Gil—it looks like *we're being taken captive!*"

These enormous aerial vessels, looking like great pointed silver pencils in flight, were possibly a thousand feet long. Gil realized, in that blood-chilling moment, that he was being forced to proceed on a course determined for him by his space captors.

"Can't you put on a burst of speed and try to get away from them?" asked Wilbur.

"I could if they weren't so close," said Gil. "But we'd be apt to crash into one of them and that would be our finish."

"Where do you suppose they are taking us?"

"I haven't any idea," said Gil. "But it's some place on the moon. We're being forced down. Get word of this back to Earth!"

Wilbur turned excitedly to the microphone.

"Hello, Mack!" he cried. "Are you there?"

"Right with you," said Carl Mack's voice.

"Mack!" cried Wilbur. "This isn't a gag. This is serious! We're surrounded by *space ships—big ones!* *There's someone on the moon!*" Wilbur paused to look out and down, at outcries from Diana and Gil. "Ye

gods!" he exclaimed. "Oh, this is terrific! . . . There's an absolutely tremendous hole in the moon . . . and—holy smoke! . . . Oh, Mack! . . . Oh, my gosh! . . . *There's a big moon city down inside that crater!*"

Carl Mack's excited, incredulous voice came booming in. "Cut it out! What are you *drinking* up there?"

"No, no!" insisted Wilbur. "Listen, Mack—listen carefully! . . . This is on the level! . . . We may not be able to broadcast much longer. These space ships are as big as the Queen Mary! . . . They're bringing us down for a forced landing . . . ! We're only about two miles above the moon now . . . I can see great round shining buildings . . . some look like tremendous Quonset huts! . . . They're all connected by big, long silver tubes—some kind of metal . . . and they're laid out around the inside walls of this stupendous crater . . . !"

Carl Mack cut in, highly aroused. "We're recording this, Williams! . . . Keep going as long as you can! Can you tell where these space ships came from? . . . Do you see any forms of life?"

"I can see them now," Wilbur reported. "They're right alongside and we're looking through our windows at each other. I don't know where they came from—but *they're not human* . . . ! They're lined up against the windows of their ships, staring at us. They're reddish skinned and their heads are about twice the size of ours, with extra large noses and big eyes . . . I can't see the rest of them but if they're as big as their heads, they're enormous!"

"What do you suppose they're doing on the moon?" cried Carl Mack.

"That's a mystery, too!" said Wilbur. "Though I don't think it's anything good as far as we're concerned!

... We're down below a mile now and we're being directed toward some tremendous runways in the center of this deep crater which extends as far as I can see. We're heading toward what looks like a big shiny metal hangar... My gosh! I guess they intend us to go right down inside that thing!" Wilbur turned, excitedly, to Gil. "What do *you* think? Isn't that what they are directing us to do?"

Gil nodded, grimly. "Apparently," he said. "That hangar looks like a tremendous train shed. It must be half a mile high and five miles long... yes—the whole end of it is opening up. We're expected to fly right into it."

Wilbur got back on the radio. "I was right," he cried. "We're coming in now and this could be an enormous wind tunnel we're going into... Looks like it was made of aluminum... There are figures running around in metal suits, something like ours!... These space ships are flying right in with us. Oh, my gosh! There's *lots* of them in here—all lined up like ships at a dock!... I'm sorry, Mack—I've got to sign off...!"

A square of red lights lit up in the space in front of Gil Benson's descending rocket. By manipulation of controls he set his ship down on the spot indicated. It came to rest with only a slight jar and rocking motion. As he completed the landing, Gil could see the three great aerial vessels gliding beyond to designated plots of their own. The end of the cavernous hangar had closed behind them.

Diana, Wilbur and Gil looked tensely at one another. *They were prisoners on the moon!*

THE peoples of Earth, terrified at the momentary prospects of another world war, were given a second major fright on receipt of news that the Moon

was inhabited. But, more stunning still was the sensational knowledge that Gil Benson and his two space travelers had fallen into the hands of the strange, unknown moon dwellers who appeared to be strongly entrenched on the dark side of the satellite.

Frantic efforts were being made and utmost vigilance maintained to reestablish communication with the now grounded space ship but the *Goodbye, World's* radio was dead and indications were that it might remain so. The Earth had quite possibly heard the last of Gil Benson and his crew of one man and a girl but, at least, they had managed to forewarn the world that potential danger to Humanity existed on the Moon.

Ruth Delano was so upset that she walked off M.G.M.'s lot, refusing to do any more work before the cameras until she had some definite word as to Gil Benson's fate.

"A relief expedition should be organized and sent up to rescue him," she said.

But Professor Crowley, when asked if this might be possible, declared that no other space ships were available. The Army and Navy could be expected to be of aid in time. However, it would require some months to go into manufacture of the atomic rocket motors as designed by Crowley and Benson. The present jet rockets, operating on liquid oxygen and alcohol, generated sufficient power to project their missiles to the moon but not to lift the additional weight of fuel and supplies necessary for the successful launching of man-carrying projectiles.

"Gil Benson and his two companions will have to extricate themselves if there is any hope of their escaping from the moon under whatever circumstances they may now be facing," said an editorial comment. "This has usually been

the price that pioneers in exploration have had to pay for their courage and daring.

"Unfortunately, we on earth have vast problems of our own to meet and can only give passing thought to this tremendous drama in the sky which, in peaceful times, would have engaged the complete and enthralled attention of every human on this planet."

"As for possible dwellers on the moon, accepting this statement as true, since we have heard nothing from them, we should not view their residence there as constituting any threat to us. Quite naturally, Gil Benson's appearance on the moon might have been regarded by these beings as an invasion, just as we would probably look upon the arrival from space of some strange creatures in a similar projectile. But we should control our fears and our imaginations until and if we receive more detailed information upon which to judge."

* * *

Hardly had Gil Benson landed his space ship in the immense hangar into which it had been forced, than it was surrounded by a small army of short, big-headed, barrel-chested, two-legged, reddish-hued beings. They clambered up the sides of the rocket, peered grotesquely in the windows and rapped on the door for entrance.

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "Maybe we'd better shoot ourselves right now and get it over with!"

"They won't take any beauty prizes according to our standards," said Gil, "But they've got to be plenty intelligent or they couldn't have a set-up like this."

"They look like a bunch of Mummers I saw in the Mummers' parade at Philadelphia last year," said Diana. "I'm not afraid of them."

Gil looked at her. "You're all right," he said, admiringly. "I'm glad you brought yourself along!"

"*I wouldn't miss this for anything on earth!*" said Diana. "How do I look, Gil? Maybe those funny eggs out there will go for *sex appeal!*"

"Good gosh!" moaned Wilbur. "Go easy, Baby! You don't know what you may be getting yourself in for!"

Diana looked at the big-headed row of curious red faces staring in through the windows. She smiled at them and waved. They looked startled and then some of them grinned and waved back, revealing large white teeth.

"See!" said Diana. "They're not so bad. I think they're almost human! They can *laugh!*" She smiled and waved again.

There was an immediate pounding on the side of the ship.

"You've made a hit," said Wilbur, "but I can't tell what kind yet."

"We'll know as soon as we open the door," said Gil. He crossed the cabin. "I suppose we might as well face it." Then a warning thought struck him. "I wonder about the atmosphere inside their buildings," he said. "They obviously require oxygen but their nostrils and lungs are so large, I'm guessing they're not native to the moon and that they've come from some planet where the air is much thinner than on earth. If that's the case, maybe it will be too rare for us to breathe."

"I'll find out for you!" volunteered Diana.

She motioned to her big-headed audience, caught their attention, pointed to her nose and then drew a deep, exaggerated breath, accompanying it with a questioning gesture. The row of big heads grinned and nodded reassurance.

"There you are!" said Diana, triumphantly. "The sign language is universal. We understand each other."

"I don't get it," said Gil, thoughtfully. "How do they know we can breathe out there? They've never seen humans before!"

The rappings on the space ship became more insistent.

"Well, there's only one way to tell," said Gil.

Reaching out, he lifted the lock arm from the door and swung it open. He looked down into the upturned features of these strange beings who regarded him with their enormous black eyes. They were all dressed the same in what appeared to be loose-fitting work uniforms of some closely woven bright material. The shape of their big-chested bodies required loose apparel.

"GREETINGS!" said Gil, and smiled.

There was an answering chorus of sounds which the three voyagers from Earth interpreted as a salutation.

"They seem to be friendly," said Wilbur. "But I'd hate to meet any of 'em in a bad dream!"

"The trick is not to let them see that you're afraid of them," counseled Diana. She stepped in the rocket's doorway beside Gil and turned her blue eyes on their captors. "Hello, boys," she said. "We're glad to see you! . . . Does anybody speak English?" Then, aside to Gil, she said: "I might as well ask that as anything. You never can tell."

There was a jabber of sounds and many of the weird looking beings pointed to their large, round, bald heads—and then at Diana.

"They've gone for you in a big way!" said Gil.

"It's your *red hair!*" said Wilbur. "That's what they're raving about!"

"Is it?" asked Diana, pleased. She ran fingers through her long bob of rich, red tresses, and her audience gave

the earthly equivalent of an admiring cheer.

"Apparently," said Gil, "judging from their appearance, hair is a scarce commodity with them—*red hair*, especially!"

"That's fine," said Diana. "I've always hoped my red hair would be good for something some day."

It was too high above the composition floor of the immense hangar for them to descend without some steps, but when Gil became convinced that they could breathe in this vast interior, he put down the extension ladder. It was grabbed on both sides by their captors who waited expectantly for their exit from the ship.

"Look at their hands!" said Wilbur. "How wide they are across! Each one is as big as two of mine together."

"And their *legs*," said Diana. "How thin and spindly! . . . What funny shapes! . . . Plano legs, narrow hips, beer barrel chests and big heads! . . . I'd say Nature gave them a raw deal!"

"Maybe that's what they needed where they came from," speculated Wilbur.

Diana prepared to be the first one out of the ship. She turned her back, wrapped her evening gown carefully about her, and stepped on the first rung of the ladder. Wilbur and Gil watched her descend, not without considerable apprehension.

"They ought to go for her legs, too," said Wilbur, "if they know a good pair when they see 'em!"

But the interest of the moon dwellers appeared to be concentrated upon the other end of her anatomy. Large red hands reached out from all sides, at the first opportunity, to touch or stroke her red hair. These beings were treating Diana as though she were some miraculous live doll. She accepted their pawing good-naturedly, and when she

reached the floor, motioned to the two remaining occupants of the ship to join her.

"I wonder what they'll do to me," said Wilbur, as he started down.

HIS tuxedo was badly in need of pressing but Hollywood's greatest publicity agent was not the least concerned about that. Gil followed him closely and the two reached the floor, unmolested. They were surrounded by easily half a hundred of these strange beings whose main interest was still centered in Diana.

"You seem to be their Number One Pin-up girl," said Wilbur. "I guess you really said something when you figured they might go for sex appeal."

"We'd better watch our step just the same," warned Gil. "I'm getting a damned uncomfortable feeling that they're just playing with us. There doesn't seem to be any authority here."

But, as Gil spoke, a new group of these strange beings, in much smarter bright attire and carrying peculiar looking weapons which looked as though they might be a form of ray gun, came marching up. The leader was a being about a half-head taller than the usual run of these creatures, and they fell back respectfully as he motioned to Diana, Gil and Wilbur to "fall in" and accompany the squad of guards.

Some of the moon dwellers now began to mount the ladder leading into the space ship.

"Get down from there!" ordered Gil, gesturing. He turned to the leader and appealed to him, by voice and signs, to keep his fellow being out of the rocket.

The leader understood and soberly assigned a guard to stand at the foot of the ladder. He then said something totally incomprehensible, giving Wilbur and Gil a push forward. Diana, for protection, slipped in between the two

men and took their arms.

"He's not so susceptible," she whispered. "But I'll go to work on him first chance I get!"

The leader fell in behind them and the whole party moved off. They walked at a good swinging gait for perhaps a mile down a long center ramp, passing great space ships on both sides with their crews busy at work around them. Each moon dweller looked up and stared at Diana as though entranced. Her red hair was proving an object of instantaneous attraction everywhere.

At a command from the leader, his guards made a left turn and escorted the three captive space travelers toward the side of the tremendous hangar, with its high, arched duraluminum roof, half a mile above them!

"This building is unbelievable," Gil remarked to Wilbur. "It dwarfs anything we've got on Earth. I'd like to see the system that manufactures oxygen for this place! And this is only *one* of the structures. You have to hand it to these round heads. They're damned smart!"

"Where do you think they're taking us?" asked Wilbur.

"Probably to meet some high mogul," said Gil.

They were entering a tunnel-like enclosure with guards stationed at regular intervals, each armed with this strange weapon which had a funnel opening at the end of a gun barrel. Again they seemed to have walked about a mile, passing many intersections which led to other buildings along the way. The three humans from Earth began to notice a little shortness of breath. They felt as they had when high in the mountains on Earth.

"It's just as I thought," said Gil. "The oxygen content is thinner here per cubic inch because these beings don't require as rich a mixture. We can get

along if we don't exert ourselves too much."

The wonder of this great moon city began to grow upon the space travelers, so much so that they temporarily lost concern for themselves and their own safety.

"This is a simply colossal engineering feat," admired Gil. "It must have taken years and years for them to have accomplished this! I'm wondering if these metals were mined on the moon or whether they had to be brought from some other planet?"

"Probably dug them up here," said Wilbur. "I can't imagine carrying such a tremendous amount of material on a long haul through space!"

FINALLY, the guards turned up a metal stairway and into the lobby of an administrative-looking building. Two guards stood in front of a great steel door. They saluted the leader by extending the right arm in front of them, at an angle over their heads. Then they stepped back and the large door slid noiselessly open, revealing a magnificent circular room containing bright chromium plated furniture and a large semi-circular council table at which sat eleven high officials of whatever government this represented. In the center, flanked five on a side, was seated the ruler. These beings were attired in loose robes of greenish-blue.

Diana, Wilbur and Gil were marched across and left standing, facing the ruler. The leader saluted, bowed, turned on his heel and led his guards out. The great door closed behind them.

It was an uncomfortable moment for the three humans from Earth. They looked up and down the formidable row of large, red faces with the big black eyes and distended nostrils. Every head was bald and almost pumpkin-shaped.

Diana, standing between Wilbur and Gil, noting again that she was the center of attention, ventured a smile but it brought no answering response here. The ruler spoke to his associates in a succession of sounds which were entirely unfamiliar. Several of them gravely replied.

"They're deciding what to do to us," guessed Wilbur, in a low voice, "and the decision is not going to be good!"

"I wish I could understand their language," said Gil. "It would help a lot."

"That will not be necessary," said the ruler, "I will speak *your* language."

No more thunderstruck and completely dumbfounded humans ever existed than these three voyagers, now so far from Earth. They even doubted their own senses.

"What did you say?" ventured Gil.

The red face of the ruler was impassive. "I said, I would speak *your* language," he repeated. "You may tell us now what you are doing here on the moon."

All three space travelers, astounded and unnerved, started talking at once.

"It was only a pleasure trip," said Wilbur.

"I just came by accident," said Diana.

"I wanted to see if it could be done," said Gil.

"Who is in command of your party?" asked the ruler.

"I am," Gil declared, taking a step forward.

Eleven pairs of big black eyes focused upon him.

"So that you may not have occasion to lie to me," said the ruler. "I should inform you that we probably know as much or more about your planet and what is taking place there, than you do."

"I can believe that," Gil replied.

"From the little I have seen here."

"Then you may be interested to know," the ruler continued, "that your arrival on the moon has saved us an expedition to your earth to kidnap some of your men of science who possess your atomic power secret. We expect to obtain such information from you and your associates and from a study of the atomic motors in your space ship."

Gil's amazement was growing.

"You speak of an expedition to our Earth. Are you implying that you possibly have been there before?"

The impassive face of the ruler relaxed in the suggestion of a smile. "We have been there many times," he said, "in the last two hundred years."

"I don't believe it!" said Wilbur, impulsively.

"**T**HEN let me remind you of several mysterious disappearances on Earth," said the ruler. "I will select three of a number that have happened in more recent times which should be within your memory or knowledge. On March 4, 1918, your time, a United States ship of nineteen thousand three hundred tons displacement, left the Barbados, West Indies, with three hundred and nine on board—and has never been heard from since."

"That's right!" identified Gil, with a feeling of sudden horror. "That was the *U.S.S. Cyclops*!"

The ruler nodded. "You have an excellent memory," he said. "On July 13th, in 1923, the Mallory liner 'Swift-star,' left the Gulf end of the Panama canal. It was never heard from again. There were thirty-three aboard. And, five years later, in December of 1928, the Danish Cadet Auxiliary ship, 'Kobenhavn,' left Montivedeo, Uruguay, bound for Australia. There were sixty aboard. It never arrived."

There was a moment of tense silence

and then Gil burst out: "Are you trying to tell us that you are responsible for these disappearances?"

The ruler nodded in affirmation.

"You peoples of earth have occasionally caught a glimpse of us," he said. "But you had difficulty believing your own eyes. Our space ship maneuvers were witnessed the night of February 9th, 1913, and reported by your Earth astronomer, Professor Chant of Toronto. His findings were published in the 'Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada,' as collected from observers in many points of your northern United States and Canada."

Gil was listening with fascinated interest. He broke in: "I remember reading of this phenomenon. It was never explained."

"I'm giving you the explanation now," said the ruler. He pressed a button and a drawer in the large semi-circular table slid open. From it, he took a sheaf of papers and thumbed through them. "Here is a statement made by your own Earth periodicals concerning the happening," he continued. "It says that 'a strange procession of unknown forms moved across the sky on the night of February 9th. Early in the evening, a luminous body was seen near the horizon, traveling straight across the heavens. Observers noted that the body was composed of three or four parts with a tail to each part. This complex structure moved with a peculiar, majestic deliberation. When it disappeared in the distance, another group emerged from its place of origin. Still a third group followed.' According to one watcher, 'there were probably thirty or thirty-two such bodies. The most peculiar thing about them was that they moved in fours, threes and twos, abreast of one another. So perfect was this line-up that it seemed almost as if an aerial fleet were maneuvering after

rigid drilling.' . . . The strange heavenly bodies were observed for almost an hour. Meteors do not move slowly and horizontally across the sky nor in orderly fashion. Careful checks revealed that no human airships had been aloft that night. *What things not of this Earth these were, God only knows.*"

THE ruler put down the paper and looked at Gil.

"You have seen us at other times as well. Once on August 27th, 1885, over Bermuda . . . another occasion in April of 1912, over Chisburg, England . . . where it was reported that, 'These strange triangular shapes, moving as might a modern autogyro, remained stationary as cloud after cloud passed by them. They finally ascended and moved out to sea, as if intelligently directed.' . . . These incidents should be enough to convince you."

"Then this possibly explains something else," said Gil. "Through radar, quite recently, contact has been made with mysterious objects of great size, moving through space on apparently pre-determined courses. Could they have been . . . ?"

The ruler nodded. "With your scientific development, we have had to be increasingly careful. We have not wanted you to know of our existence or our plans until you were incapable of protecting yourselves. But we have also needed to study the human race. Whenever we have required subjects, we have landed on your oceans near the selected vessels, taken all on board captive, destroyed all trace of the ships, and transported the human cargo direct to the moon or our planet."

"What is your planet?" demanded Gil.

The ruler smiled. "Our name for it would sound, in your language, like

'Erakea'—but you Earth people call it 'Mars'!"

"*Mars!*" exclaimed Wilbur. "Ye Gods!"

"You have often wondered if Mars were inhabited," said the ruler. "Now you know."

"But what are you Martians—excuse me—*Erakeans*—doing on the moon?" exploded Gil.

The ruler eyed his associates, all of whom turned their heads in his direction, before he replied. "We are preparing to move our population to another planet," he announced.

"You mean you are going to transfer all your *Erakeans* to the moon?" asked Gil.

The ruler shook his head. "No," he answered. "*We are going to take over the Earth.*"

"But you can't do that!" protested Wilbur, impulsively. "We won't let you!"

The ruler and his ten high official associates smiled in unison, as though amused.

"We do not expect you Earth peoples to surrender peacefully—but you cannot help yourselves. We will overwhelm and annihilate you."

This declaration was made as simple statement of fact but it almost froze the blood in the veins of the three humans from Earth.

"But why pick on us?" spoke up Diana. "Why don't you go to some other planet that isn't inhabited?"

The ruler's black eyes fixed upon her. "You will make a fine citizen of *Erakea*," he said. "We have been trying for years to breed offspring with *red hair*. It is a symbol of *Erakean* strength and beauty."

"Oh, I'm not staying here!" said Diana, quickly. "I've got a date back on Earth!"

"You are *all* staying here," an-

nounced the ruler, quietly. "You are joining our little colony from Earth."

The stunning force of these words hammered against their consciousness. They had been kept standing, at almost attention, before these seated officials who were amiable enough in a reserved way, but who extended no human courtesy.

"You don't intend to mix your species with ours, do you?" Wilbur blurted out.

The ruler smiled and nodded. "That experiment is now being conducted. It may be found desirable to preserve a remnant of your best human specimens to combine with ours in order that our future generations may be provided with a more suitable physical organism to live on your Earth!"

The frankness of this ruler was appalling.

"You didn't answer Miss Fenimore's question," persisted Gil. "Why did you not select an uninhabited planet to occupy?"

The ruler's reply was direct and startling. "We have scouted every planet within a radius of two hundred million miles of Erakea and *your* Earth is the one with atmospheric and living conditions most nearly approximating ours!"

GIL'S mind now began to encompass the diabolical reason for the Martian's colonization on the moon. This tremendous organization was being set up here as a jumping off base for the launching of a devastating attack upon Earth. It looked to Gil as though the time for this assault was fast approaching.

"But *why* are you Erakeans leaving *your* planet?" Gil asked.

"It is not a matter of choice," replied the ruler. "We have known for centuries that we would one day be

compelled to abandon Erakea. Despite all our scientific efforts, we have been losing our atmosphere, oxygen and water. We have built an elaborate system of canals to tap the remaining water from our fast diminishing polar caps. We've tried to encourage vegetation, rich in iron, which gives off oxygen—but the red surface of our planet has rightly indicated to your Earth observers that an oxidation process is taking place and we are losing oxygen much faster than we can replenish it.

"The situation is now critical. In another hundred years, no life such as ours will be possible. The complete transition must be effected within that period."

The three travelers from Earth stood silent and momentarily speechless. The ruler, perceiving this, continued.

"So, you see," he quietly explained, "it is either *our* extinction or *yours*—and we prefer it to be *yours*!"

It was difficult to defy such an attitude. There was no outward belligerency, no external war-like gesture.

"Your planning has been very thorough," Gil finally observed.

The ruler nodded in agreement. "It has been going on for centuries. Our study of your human race has shown us that we had but to wait and you would ultimately almost destroy yourselves. We have seen the great wars rage over the Earth's surface, time and again, in your short modern history. We have been vastly amused that you should have named our planet 'Mars' after the 'God of War,' because of its bright red color, when we have witnessed your carnage on Earth. But, now, we have not much longer to wait. Your *Third World War*, almost within *one* generation, is about to break out. This will so weaken you peoples of Earth that our job of conquest will be made easy. You will be incapable of

offering any worthy resistance and you will have lost not merely a war—but a planet!"

Gil found it difficult to keep his feelings under control. He was humiliated, as a human, to have to concede that these beings from another planet were justified, because of Man's inhumanity to man, in standing by and awaiting until Man's own greed and hate and lust for earthly power should accomplish his destruction.

"I'm afraid," he was compelled to admit, "that you Erakeans understand us better than we understand ourselves. It would be useless for me to contend that your plan of conquest is wrong. I agree, knowing what I do now, that if we have another war on Earth, we cannot resist you."

The ruler smiled and nodded. "*We are counting on that war,*" he said.

"Don't be too sure!" broke out Wilbur, in a gesture of defiance. "We won't be any push-overs at that! Wait until you run into a few of our atomic bombs!"

The black eyes of the ruler and his ten official associates brightened with interest.

"By the time we go to war with Earth, we will have the atomic bomb secret," said the ruler. "And your entire world will be a helpless target from the moon."

GIL well knew that this would be no idle threat.

"You mean to say—with all your development, you still don't have . . . ?" he started to ask.

The ruler held up his large red hand.

"We have advanced far beyond your Earth scientists in the use of gases for fuel and power but we have not yet succeeded in splitting the atom. That is why we are so happy to welcome you and your space ship, which we learn

from Earth broadcasts, is equipped with atomic motors."

Wilbur started to reply again in an antagonistic mood but Gil squeezed his arm.

"Perhaps," he suggested, "if the scientists of our two planets could be brought together, we might help you solve your problems on Mars—I mean, *Erakea*—so that your population could remain there."

The ruler shook his head. "That has all been considered," he said. "It is too late. We must go ahead with our plan of evacuation. The eleventh hour is already here."

"What is the approximate population on your planet?" asked Gil.

"Our population is not what it once was," said the ruler. "We have had to control our birth rate because of the scarcity of oxygen and water. We now have about two hundred million."

"Why we could stick that number in a corner of Russia!" proposed Wilbur. "What's the use of going to war? Come on down and make yourselves at home!"

The ruler smiled, "The Russians might not welcome our residence," he said. "We have observed the difficulty that even a comparatively small number of Jews are having, to find a place to peacefully reside. If you Earth peoples are that unfriendly toward one another, we could hardly expect you to permit immigration from a neighboring planet. It will be much easier and simpler to clear the Earth of most humans and take it over for ourselves."

Diana had been restraining herself with remarkable composure, considering her temperament. "You don't believe in living and let live, do you?" she challenged. "You talk of our killing each other—but is that any worse than what you are planning to do to us?" Her blue eyes had a red glint in them.

"I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself!"

The ruler and his ten official associates appeared to enjoy this outburst, exceedingly. Their smug composure was maddening.

"May I ask," pressed the ruler, in accents directed particularly toward Diana, "what *you* would do if you were running out of water and oxygen on *your* planet?"

Diana was nonplused for reply. She started to speak, thought better of it, bit her lip, and then stammered: "Well, I don't know—I'd probably start looking around . . ." Her face was red^d dening. "I mean . . . !" she added, and then gave up entirely.

"Precisely," said the ruler. "*You* would be compelled to do exactly what *we* have done. And if you found another world similar to Earth, which would sustain your life, you would begin laying plans to occupy it, even though it was populated. So—*why should you blame us?*"

THERE seemed no answer, in the larger cosmic sense, to this kind of "survival of the fittest" logic. Diana, Wilbur and Gil were being reduced to a state of mental and physical helplessness. They were now weary of standing before this strange tribunal and growing more and more apprehensive as to what fate awaited them.

"Then, I guess there's nothing more to say," Diana finally replied. "But I would be interested to know what you intend doing with us."

The ruler smiled. "You will be very useful," he said. "You will be preserved in appreciation for your services to us. And we will permit you to witness our conquest of your Earth at the end of your atomic war."

Diana looked questioningly toward Gil, whose face did not betray his own

fears.

"You may have a contempt for the human race," said Gil. "But if you are expecting us to sell it out, you are badly mistaken!"

A hard look came into the black eyes of the ruler. "We will see about that!" he said. "You three will step into that side room, please, and remain until your presence is requested."

The ruler pointed to his left and, as he did so, a door, hitherto invisible, opened in the circular wall. A guard stepped through and stood at attention.

The dismissal had an authority about it which could not be denied. Without another word, the three humans from Earth took their leave of the Erakean council and marched out of the chamber.

CHAPTER XII

GIL BENSON put a finger to his lips the instant the door of the side room was closed and they found themselves apparently alone. He indicated by his expression that there was probably a mechanism similar to Earth's dictaphone concealed in the walls, ceiling or floor. The three also had the unpleasant feeling that they were being watched by invisible eyes.

There were inviting reclining couches and chairs, upholstered in a greenish blue material which matched the color of the robes worn by Erakean officials. This room appeared to be a place of waiting for those who desired conference with the ruler or members of his executive staff. On the walls hung chromium-framed, oil painted portraits of Erakeans, with a strange-worded letterings and markings, which seemed to be the dates, under them. The big red heads of these peculiar, important-looking beings, with their abnormally large black eyes, gave the travelers from

Earth a feeling that they were imprisoned in some fantastic rogues' gallery.

"I suppose these gentlemen, if you can call them that," said Diana, "are the George Washingtons, Abraham Lincolns, Thomas Edisons and what-have-you's of different countries on their own planet. But just looking at them gives me the creeps!"

"I'll bet we're supposed to see these mugs for some reason," said Wilbur. "Maybe they think it will impress us."

"You mean depress us," said Gil, in a guarded tone. "These men of Mars may be nice people, by themselves, but I've had my fill of them right now. I wonder what their women are like?"

"You *would!*" said Diana. "You've got enough glamour girls on Earth. I have my doubts if you'd like the Erakean variety."

As she spoke, almost as though timed to the remark, an inner door opened and a serving table was wheeled out by two Erakean maids. They were not bald like the men but had black hair which matched their eyes and which they wore in a top knot on their heads. The effect was anything but beautiful as judged by Earth standards.

"Your doubts are confirmed," Gil whispered to Diana.

The Erakean maids, dressed alike in loose fitting lavender gowns, pushed the serving table to a position in front of chairs and arranged the food it contained on silver-colored plates. They had not as yet looked directly at those they had come to serve.

"If we could get them back to Earth," said Wilbur, "I could sell them to Barnum & Bailey's side show to replace their Ubangis! Boy! Could I make a clean-up! . . . Women from Mars! . . . Step right up, men, and have a look! Guaranteed to make you love all girls on Earth—or your money back!"

"You'd better be careful," warned Diana. "Maybe *they* understand English!"

"I'll try 'em out," said Wilbur. He advanced toward them with friendly gestures. "You're *beautiful*, Babies!" he said.

"Hey!" cried Diana. "I don't like that!"

The two Erakean women looked up at Hollywood's greatest press agent and gave out sounds which resembled human giggles.

"They may not understand," said Wilbur, "but they get the general idea." He then became more expansive as they stared at him in apparent wonderment. "I'm mad about you! You've got the skin I'd love *not* to touch; the lips I'd thrill *not* to kiss; the waist I'd prefer *not* to hug, and the legs I'd rather *not* look at! . . . All in all, Babies, you're a frightfully delightful mess!"

The two Erakean maids bowed politely as though complimented. Wilbur bowed in return.

"You like that, don't you? I thought you would!"

The maids bowed again. They then indicated that the places were set and the food was ready for eating. Wilbur motioned to Diana and Gil who had been standing back, amused at his antics, despite the serious situation they all faced.

"Come on," he said. "This stuff looks good!"

THEY took their seats around the table. The two Erakean maids, now ready to leave, smiled and bowed. The one nearest Wilbur touched him on the shoulder.

"If you want something, just call us," she said.

Hollywood's greatest press agent, in the act of sampling a drink, let it come out his nose and ears.

The two Erakean maids departed with a burst of giggling sounds.

"I told you to be careful!" scolded Diana.

"These Martians are amazing people," said Gil. "I wouldn't be surprised to learn that English is a required language study on Mars in preparation for their invasion. This ought to teach you not to be so funny!"

Wilbur was still nursing his windpipe and trying to catch his breath.

"Ye gods!" he said. "It's a good thing they had a sense of humor or I'd probably be on my way to the firing squad!"

"What makes you think you won't be yet?" said Diana.

The food set before them seemed to be on the order of a vegetable plate and the drink, a new type of fruit juice. The vegetables were not of any recognizable variety but were surprisingly appetizing in flavor.

"They must raise these on the moon," Gil speculated. "Probably in some sort of hot houses. Not bad."

"No meat," said Wilbur. "Maybe that's a good sign. I was afraid, with their big mouths and big teeth, they might be *cannibalistic*!"

Diana nudged Gil's knee under the table.

"We can't keep up this kidding," she said, in a low voice. "What *are* we going to do?"

"I'm trying to think," said Gil, almost under his breath. "We're in a terrifically tough spot!"

"It's all your fault," accused Wilbur. "Diana and I wanted to go straight back to Earth—but, no—you had to have a look at this side of the moon!"

"I'm mighty glad I did," said Gil. "If I hadn't, no one on Earth would have had any warning of the danger they are facing."

"They don't know very much, even

now," said Wilbur. "But if we could ever get back, we'd make their hair stand on end!"

"We've got to get back!" said Gil. "If we don't, its *really* going to be 'Goodbye, World!'"

Wilbur looked glum. "What chance do we have of escaping if the ones they've kidnapped have never been able to get away?"

"That's different," said Gil. "They didn't have any means of getting back. But we've still got our space ship."

"We'll be lucky if we ever get inside it again," said Wilbur. "We may have what looks like a certain amount of freedom, but I'll guarantee they're covering every move we make. If we get away from this crowd, it'll be a work of genius!"

Gil nodded, thoughtfully. "We've got to stick together," he said. "If we let them separate us, we're finished!"

"I agree," said Diana. "We'll have to use our wits to keep them from doing it."

"We can't use force, that's certain," said Gil. "I never felt as helpless in my life. But I'm glad of one thing."

"What's that?" asked Diana.

"I'm glad," said Gil, "that it turned out the way it did and Professor Crowley didn't come with me. His knowledge of atomic fission would be invaluable to these Martians. They can't get too much from me."

BUT they can get plenty from the study of those atomic power motors," said Wilbur.

"That's true," Gil admitted, "and we'll have to find some way to stop that."

Diana had a sudden thought. "Gil," she said. "If I could fix it so you and Wilbur could make a get-away, would you shoot back to Earth and leave me here?"

"I should say not!" Gil declared.

"But wait a minute!" persisted Diana. "Just think what it means to Earth for you to get back with a real report! It can be the saving of our planet. I seem to be quite an attraction here. I might be able to wangle it so I could get you and Wilbur back in the space ship, under some pretext—maybe for a demonstration of some sort . . . and you could manage to escape."

Gil considered the proposal and shook his head.

"Even if you could," he said, "the space ship is indoors, under cover. They certainly would never let us get it outside unless it was manned by their own engineers and we had guns at our backs. Besides, after what I heard the Big Chief say about experiments they are conducting, I don't like the thought of what would happen to you."

"Don't worry about me," said Diana. "I'm going to remain the only red-head on the moon!"

"We're living one hell of a movie plot," said Wilbur. "And we can't do anything about it!"

The door to the official chamber suddenly opened and a guard stepped in. He pointed to Diana, motioning for her to accompany him.

"Just what I've been expecting," said Gil. "We're going with you."

He took one of Diana's arms and Wilbur the other, as they walked, three abreast, to the door. Another guard stepped in. He said something in Erakean and both guards separated Diana from her two fellow human escorts.

"We go where she goes!" Wilbur insisted.

A blast of Erakean language silenced him.

"I think they're swearing at us," he said.

"Better not resist," Diana urged. "It

won't get us anywhere."

Gil remonstrated but to no avail. Two other guards appeared. Their round pumpkin faces had deep-furrowed scowls. They looked savage and threatening as they flanked Diana and made it clear that Wilbur and Gil were to remain where they were. Despite their resolution to stay together, whatever the circumstances, they were being torn apart with ridiculous ease.

"If you get any chance to make a break for it," Diana called. "Don't mind me. I can take care of myself."

The door closed, shutting her from view.

"Damn-it-to-hell!" said Gil.

He took to pacing about the room like an animal caged, and trying frantically to find a way out.

Wilbur sank down in a chair with his head in his hands. "She's a game kid!" he said. "She's got more nerve than I have!"

"If we could only fight back," raged Gil. "That's what makes it tough."

Wilbur groaned. "If they take over the Earth as easily as they've taken us, there won't be anything to it."

"And they'll do it, too," said Gil, "unless the Earth is warned and prepared. They've spent centuries in figuring out every little move. Before they attack our planet they intend to know just how much resistance we can offer and exactly how to counteract it."

"And here we sit," said Wilbur, "like a couple of stumble-bums, twiddling our thumbs."

"Damn-it-to-hell!" said Gil.

THE girl from Earth with the blue, blue eyes and the bright red hair, was led across the now vacant Administrative Chamber, through a duraluminum tunnel and into a residential type of structure, cylindrical in shape.

She was left by herself in a luxuri-

ously appointed living room which contained more of the chromium-plated furniture, having the appearance of some of Earth's most ultra-futuristic designs. There was a large oil painting portrait on the wall which she instantly recognized as a likeness of the ruler. There were no windows in the room—no windows in any of the buildings—yet a soft, evenly distributed light seemed to radiate from the walls, themselves.

But there was one object which caught Diana's particular attention. It stood almost head high from the floor and was about the size and shape of an automatic refrigerator. It contained a white screened panel, about two feet square, set in its upper half and beneath it, what appeared to be a sound box, then two rows of push buttons.

Since she was alone and there was no one to prevent her experimenting, Diana pressed a button which, because of its separate position, she judged must start the operating mechanism. There was a low whirring hum which died away as the white screen lighted up.

"Let's see," mused Diana. "What next?"

She pressed a button on the first row, and waited. Presently an image began to form on the screen and the face of an Erakean appeared. There was the sound of strange music and the lips of this being were moving.

"My gosh!" exclaimed Diana. "I've tuned in on the *Frank Sinatra of Mars!*"

She listened for a moment to what sounded like the melancholy wail of a heart-broken lover.

"I can't take it," she said, and pressed a button on the second row. The scene immediately vanished and another image slowly faded in. A voice was singing which sounded strangely familiar.

"When the blue of the night, meets the gold of the day . . . boo-boop-a-doo! . . . Someone . . . waits . . . for . . . I!"

The face of the singer was now clearly visible.

"Bing Crosby!" cried Diana.

The sensation of seeing and hearing him, so close and yet so far away was too much. She burst into tears.

"This is your Old Groaner, Bing Crosby," said the voice. "Coming at you from the golden hills of Hollywood, where one little *pull* is worth a thousand pushes—or, as I've often said to aspiring boys and girls, 'where there's life, there's *Hope*' . . . Hiya, Bob! . . . Are you listenin' . . . ?"

Diana, fighting to gain control of herself, suddenly felt a presence in the room. She reached out to push off the button as a large hand stroked her hair. Whirling, Diana found herself caught in the arms of the ruler of Erakean forces on the moon.

"You are beautiful!" he said, in excellent English, as he held her.

"I've heard that line before," said Diana. "Let me go!"

"We have waited a long time for someone like you," said the ruler. His big hands had grasped her shoulders in a vice-like grip. He held her powerless at arms' length as his large black eyes enjoyed the sight of her.

"I suppose I should be flattered," Diana said. "But I'm not!"

The ruler seemed stung by this remark.

"We are the more advanced race," he said, "If we offer a few of you humans survival, you should be honored to blend your race with ours!"

"Are you kidding?" said Diana. She threw back her red head and exploded with laughter.

The ruler stared at her with an expression of outraged pride and bewilderment.

"Excuse me," laughed Diana. "I haven't heard anything so funny for years . . . Blend our race with *yours*? . . . Why, we've got monkeys on Earth that are better looking than you are!"

The ruler shook her savagely. "Stop it!" he commanded. "You can't make fun of me! I won't permit it!"

Diana kept on laughing. "You're a scream," she cried. "You should be a comedian."

Angrily, the man from Mars drew her to him and kissed her. "Do you think that's funny?" he demanded.

Held tight in his embrace, Diana still managed to feign amusement. "*Funny!*" she repeated. "You're getting funnier all the time!"

SHE laughed in his face and this kind of treatment, whether on Earth or on Mars or on the Moon, would have been too much for any romantically inclined human or other type of being.

A torrent of choice Erakean epithets burst from the mouth of the chagrined ruler as he shoved Diana from him. She sat down suddenly in a half reclining chair and lay looking up at him, still convulsed. Her conduct posed a psychological problem of major significance to the man from Mars. There was no humor in this situation for him.

"We know we are not a handsome race," he finally admitted, as he paced up and down. "That is because of the changing environment on our planet. A million years ago, our ancestors were great seven foot red men. They did not need the lung capacity nor the air chambers we require in the brain today, in order to live.

"Nature demands that all life adapt itself to the changing conditions she imposes. We expect to regain, in time, much of our past physical glory, by residence on your Earth. We had hoped, through experimentation, by blending

certain Earth types, such as you represent, to greatly shorten the time when we might acquire the stature desired.

"You are the first woman from Earth, in our possession, who has reacted in this manner. But perhaps, after you have been with us for a few years, and when we have taken over the Earth, you will change your attitude."

Diana had listened quietly. "You've got a problem," she said. "But you're *not* going to solve it through the human race without a terrible fight. You might as well annihilate us all to begin with!"

The ruler looked at her as though he respected her counsel.

"We may have to do that," he said. "But your red hair is beautiful. And, since this color is a heritage of our species, I was hoping that a new race . . . !" He broke off and gave a shrug of the shoulders, "Oh, well—in that case, we must be prepared to eliminate you Earth peoples quickly. Only one step remains. We must acquaint ourselves with your method of creating atomic power."

Diana sat upright. "How do you propose to do that?" she asked.

"You and your associates have that knowledge between you," said the ruler. "You will reveal it to us."

"We will die first!" Diana declared.

"You will not die," said the ruler.

"We will see to that. But we have a serum, similar to yours on Earth, which, when injected, causes one to talk freely and speak the truth. When the time comes, we will assemble our scientists, place them aboard your space ship and have you three explain its workings. It will be very simple."

Diana laughed to cover up her own fears.

"I'd like to see you try it," she challenged. "I don't think you've got such a serum—and, if you have, I'll bet it wouldn't work on us."

"It's worked on other humans," said the ruler. "We've always obtained what we wanted to know."

He watched her reaction, closely.

Diana's blue eyes met his black ones. "But you've not always *gotten* what you wanted!" she said.

The ruler stepped to the door and opened it. A guard stood outside. He snapped an order in Erakean.

"We have ways of getting that, too," he said, pointedly, to Diana. "We will see. Go with him!"

Diana advanced toward him, pulling a long strand of red hair from her hair. She handed it to the amazed ruler.

"Here, your Majesty," she said. "Keep this to remember me by!" With this, she walked out the door and fell in alongside the guard as a completely baffled man from Mars gnashed the finest set of teeth on the Moon.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN the door opened and Diana Fenimore, former parachute jumper with Buzz Reynolds Flying Circus, walked in on Wilbur Williams and Gil Benson, it was cause for a joyous reunion. She had not been away from them very long but every minute had seemed a small eternity to the two men so vitally interested in her personal safety.

"I've made a meal of my fingernails since you've been gone," said Wilbur, exhibiting his hand. "What happened?"

"I'm still the only red-head on the moon," said Diana.

Both men exclaimed their relief.

"If they'd have touched you, I'd have killed somebody," declared Gil. "I just about went mad in here, waiting and wondering. Where did they take you?"

"To see the ruler . . . the King . . . his Nibs . . . Baldy . . . you know—the Round-Headed Ringleader.

You should have seen his snazzy hang-out . . . it was some dump—complete with a Martian version of radio-television . . . They're getting all our Earth broadcasts . . . I pushed a button and got Mars, myself. Then I tuned in on, guess who—*Bing Crosby!*"

"Ye gods!" said Wilbur. "That means there's soap operas on the moon! You can't even get away from them up here!"

"Cut out the gags!" said Gil, impatiently. "I want the low-down. Why did the Big Chief send for you?"

Diana smiled and rolled her blue eyes.

"It seems he had a crush on me," she said, "but I laughed it out of him. That made him mad so he's decided to destroy the entire human race."

"Good going!" said Wilbur. "I suppose that includes *me?*"

Diana smiled. "You're *human*, aren't you?"

Wilbur groaned. "I don't know *what* I am any more."

Gil wasn't in a humorous mood. "So what's he going to do?" he asked.

"You'll like this," said Diana. "He's going to shoot us full of truth-serum and take us aboard your space ship with a bunch of scientists and have us spill all we know."

"That won't take me five minutes," said Wilbur.

"He says the stuff is sure fire," Diana continued. "That it will make us talk like sixty and we'll have to give out with whatever information he wants."

Gil did not conceal his grave concern. "If that scheme works," he said, "we're cooked—and so is everyone else on Earth. I'd sooner kill ourselves right now than . . .!"

He didn't finish. The door swung open and a line of guards filed in followed by the burly leader who had first escorted them from the space ship ter-

minal to this administration center.

"Hello!" said Wilbur. "This is where we came in."

"And this is where we go out," said Gil.

The leader motioned to them to accompany the guards and they left the side room, re-entering the large chamber. The council of eleven Erakeans had re-convened and seated beside the ruler were five new and important appearing men from Mars, attired in bluish green, light-fitting uniforms with red stripes over their shoulders.

Diana, Wilbur and Gil were required to face the ruler as before but, this time, the guards lined up behind them and stood at attention.

"**IT IS** the decision of the court of Erakea, on the moon," pronounced the ruler, "that your lives will be spared so long as you co-operate with us. *Word has just been received from Earth that war is a certainty within the next twenty-four hours.* This means that we must proceed at once with our own plans of conquest and it is necessary that we obtain, without delay, the atomic knowledge you possess.

"You are being returned to your space ship, accompanied by our five greatest scientists and myself. To make certain you will give us the desired information, you will now each submit to an injection of truth serum which, by the time you reach the space depot, will have taken effect."

So speaking, the ruler pressed a button, a door opened, and out walked two Erakeans pushing a portable medical cabinet. They were followed by a distinguished looking man of Mars whom the ruler introduced as the medical chief of staff. His two assistants prepared the syringes and handed him number one. All Erakeans were watching this ceremony with great and tense interest.

"I will take the lady first," said this dignitary in perfect English. His hands were encased in Earth's equivalent of rubber gloves.

Gil stepped forward. "Is this absolutely necessary?" he protested. "This young woman has no information of value to you. Why make her go through this?"

The ruler smiled, showing his set of large white teeth. "This serum will not permanently affect the mind," he reassured. "It does not put you to sleep or make you semi-conscious as your Earth formula does. You simply will feel like talking and telling what you know."

The two assistants stepped to the side of Diana, took her left arm and dabbed a medicated piece of gauze-like material on the inside of the arm, below the elbow. Diana turned her head away as the doctor deftly inserted the needle and injected the serum. He handed the empty syringe to one of his assistants, took a loaded one in exchange, and turned to Wilbur.

"You're next," he said.

"Why don't you have me swear on a Bible?" said Wilbur. "I'll tell the truth just as quickly that way."

"Give me your arm!" ordered the doctor.

"You're wasting a shot on me," Wilbur continued. "I'm a press agent—and we never tell the truth!" He got jabbed just the same. "Okay," he said. "You've stuck the needle in—but you're not going to like what I play back to you!"

The doctor, with an annoyed gesture, took up his third and last hypodermic syringe and looked at Gil Benson.

"How long does this effect last?" Gil asked.

"About an hour of your time," said the doctor.

Gil held out his arm. "Shoot," he

said, "and get it over with!"

With the injections completed, Diana, Wilbur and Gil were marched quickly outside where a large bus-like vehicle, six wheels on a side, was waiting with a driver. There were wide running boards upon which the guards stood after the three Earth captives, the five scientists, the ruler and his ten official associates had been placed aboard. They were then whisked noiselessly and speedily, by a different tunneled highway route, to the great space terminal.

IT WAS a welcome sight to catch a glimpse, once again, of the only object on the Moon which was familiar and which had a tie with Earth.

They dismounted from the motor vehicle, under guard, and advanced toward the space ship, followed by the group of notables. A large crowd of curious Erakeans, who had evidently learned of their forthcoming appearance, surrounded the rocket. The guards made a lane for the official party and the three captives from Earth. They all drew up at the foot of the extension ladder leading into the space ship. The ruler then addressed Diana, Wilbur and Gil.

"In a short time you will be ready to respond to the questionings of our scientists. You will be unable to refuse any request we may make for information on any subject with which you are familiar. We desire a demonstration of the operation of your atomic power motor and an explanation of its working principles. While we are waiting for the serum to take effect, my ten associates are going to make a tour of the interior."

The guard, who had been on duty, protecting the entrance to the space ship, stepped aside to allow the long robed figures of the stately Erakeans

to mount the ladder and enter the rocket.

Diana was again the center of attention with Erakeans crowding close to her and some boldly reaching out to touch her red hair. She suddenly turned to the ruler and with her blue, blue eyes registering profound admiration, cried out:

"I've got to say it! I've been thinking over what you said to me. I see now it's the only way out for your race and ours, too. After this next war, the atomic bombs won't leave enough of us alive to make a real human race. We're going to need new blood, new stock, new vitality . . . !"

The large black eyes of the ruler were expanding with delight and excitement.

"Diana!" Gil broke in. "Have you gone . . . ?"

"No, Gil!" she cried. "You'll see it, too, in time. These Martians have a lot to give us. They can save our human race from extinction! I, for one, will be glad to offer myself as a co-creator of the coming new race! Oh! I'm thrilled at the thought and I'm sure other Earth women will be, too—when the time comes!"

There was a stir among high Erakean officials who could understand English.

"Babe!" exclaimed Wilbur. "You don't mean it! . . . It's this *serum* . . . !"

The ruler smiled and shook his head. "The serum does not persuade against one's will," he said. "It just releases the truth and real convictions of the individual. This fair creature from your Earth has simply awakened, as I had hoped, to the cosmic point of view!"

"That's it!" cried Diana, with a rapturous enthusiasm. She impulsively threw her arms around the ruler's neck—and kissed him on the cheek.

There was a chorus of ecstatic sounds from the lips of the assembled Era-keans, similar in nature to the reaction of an Earth movie audience during a romantic clinch. The ruler, his red face flushed a brighter red, was immensely pleased. He said something in Erakean to his fellow beings, referring intimately to the feminine object of their admiration, and all big heads nodded in warm approval.

"You will never regret your great decision," he declared to Diana.

The ten official associates, having completed their inspection of the rocket's interior, were now descending the ladder and making way for the ruler and Erakean scientists to take over proceedings. The ruler turned to a stunned and glowering Gil Benson, and said: "My associates and I will now precede you into your ship."

"Very well," said Gil.

"Oh, no!" protested Diana. "On our Earth, it's a common courtesy for ladies to be first. . . ."

The ruler laughed affably and made a gracious gesture. "It shall be so here," he said.

Diana pulled up her evening gown above her knees, revealing the prettiest legs ever seen on the Moon, or on Mars, for that matter, and started up the ladder.

"Come on, Gil . . . Come on, Wilbur!" she called.

Wonderingly, her two fellow humans began to ascend after her.

"Wait!" called the ruler.

Diana turned at the top of the ladder and looked down, smilingly. "That's all right," she directed. "You're next . . . come on up!"

THE ruler motioned to the five Era-kean scientists who lined up behind him. He followed on the footsteps of Gil. Diana stood on the little platform

just outside the entrance to the ship. Wilbur, trailing her, let loose a blast of feeling, in a low voice.

"You're a hell of a human, *you* are!"

"Get in there and shut up!" hissed Diana.

Gil, next, was equally furious. "Damn you!" he said. "I'll never . . . !"

"Get inside!" Diana ordered.

Gil gave her a curious, uncomprehending glance as he entered the space ship. The ruler of all Erakean forces on the Moon had now reached the little landing opposite the doorway. Beneath him, on different rungs of the ladder, were two of his planet's finest scientists and three waiting on the ground level to ascend.

"Greetings to 'Goodbye, World!'" said Diana.

The ruler paused and bowed. He liked the little ceremony she was making of this occasion. But he didn't like what she did next. She gave him an unexpected tremendous push which toppled him from the ladder and caused him to land on the scientist under him, breaking his grip so that the two of them fell upon the second scientist and all three bounced upon the three waiting below!

Above them, a red-head from Earth, galvanized into action, stepped into the doorway, then reached out and pulled the steel door of the space ship shut. There was consternation and pandemonium among the Erakeans.

Inside the space ship, Diana cried out: "Give it the power, Gil! Quick! Get us out of here!"

Gil hesitated. "But the roof . . . !" he said.

"*To hell with the roof—let's go!*" cried Diana.

Gil jumped for the starting lever and shoved it down. The atomic motors came on with a roar. The ship lifted horizontally, slowly, at first.

Diana looked anxiously out the windows. "Hurry, Gil! They're running to their own space ships. They're going to chase us!"

"I can't help it," said Gil. "I've got to get the nose up." He worked the elevating levers. "No telling what . . .!"

The half mile high ceiling of the space ship terminal was needed for Gil to maneuver his rocket into position. He passed over scores of Martian aerial vessels, docked below. Beneath him all was wild commotion.

"Well, here goes!" he said, grimly, and turned the power full on.

There was a blinding flash and the terminal disappeared. Their rocket had cut through the duraluminum roof as a sharp knife slitting through tin foil. They were out in space above the Moon, rising perpendicularly and hanging on to hand grips near the instrument board as their light-weight bodies, removed from the pressurized air balance of the Martian's moon city, now had a tendency to float about the cabin.

"California, here I come!" shouted Wilbur, excitedly. "Diana, you're wonderful! . . . Marvelous!"

Gil, busy at the controls, gave vent to his own appreciation. "You're the damndest woman I ever met!"

"Thanks!" said Diana.

"How did you ever think of this?" Gil asked.

"That was easy," Diana laughed. "I rehearsed for the part before we left Earth. Don't you remember what happened to Ruth Delano?"

"You're a great actress, Baby," complimented Wilbur. "And you'll never play a greater role than you did just now. You had Gil and me fooled—and what you did to those Martians, they'll never get over!"

"You can bet on that," said Gil. "And, if they catch us again, I hate to think what they'll do to us."

"What do you think of their chances?" asked Diana.

"We've got more power," said Gil. "We should be able to keep ahead of them till we get to the Earth's upper atmosphere. We'll have to slow up then and take our time getting down to avoid friction which could burn us up."

"Then they might catch up to us on the last lap?" said Diana.

"It's possible," said Gil. "They've probably had a great deal of experience slipping in and out of the Earth's atmosphere—and there's where I'm handicapped."

"Oh, well," Diana. "We've gone through so much now—I'm not going to worry till it happens!"

Gil looked at her, admiringly. "I could go for you," he said, "in a *terrific* way!"

"You could!" said Wilbur. "Well, what do you know—so could I!"

Diana looked both pleased and startled.

"You're both kidding," she said.

"Not me," declared Wilbur. "If you want to know the truth, I lit a torch for you the first time I saw you. I said to myself, 'Wilbur, old man, she's your dish.' . . . So you might as well know it, I'm head over heels, Baby. You've got me on the hook and I don't want off!"

"But I wasn't even *fishing*!" Diana protested.

"Your eyes were doing something," said Wilbur. "And so were your red hair . . . and your figure . . . and your legs, if you don't mind!"

"Why, *Wilbur*!" said Diana.

"Okay," rejoined Gil. "If you're telling her how *you* feel, then I have the same right. I thought you were cute and amusing the first time I met you—but when you made that parachute jump on my ranch, I put you down in my book in the Number One Spot.

You've been there ever since!"

"OH, GIL!" cried Diana, impulsively.

"That's just a line," accused Wilbur. "He's handed that out to at least a dozen of his glamour girls. How do you suppose he keeps them all dangling? They all think they're *it*!"

"That may be your opinion," said Gil. "But it's not true. I haven't played any favorites up to now."

Hollywood's greatest press agent was getting more and more aroused. "You're not going to take my girl away from me!" he cried.

Diana's blue eyes flashed. "I'm *not* your girl!" she declared.

"We'll settle this right now," said Gil. "Diana, do you or do you not love Wilbur?"

"You don't have to answer that here!" Wilbur warned.

Diana hesitated. "I've got to answer it," she said. "I'm sorry, Wilbur . . . I'm very fond of you—but I don't . . .!"

"There you are!" Gil persisted. "That's *your* answer! One more question, Diana—how do you feel toward me?"

"I'm *crazy* about you and *you* know it!" Diana replied at once.

Gil turned from the controls, grabbed her in his arms and kissed her.

Wilbur moved away, forlorn and heart-sick.

"It's that damn truth serum," he said. "But I'm not giving her up yet. When Gil gets back to Earth and sees Ruth Delano, he'll probably feel differently."

Looking glumly out the windows, Wilbur suddenly sighted something.

"Ye gods!" he cried. "*Here they come!*"

He pointed and Diana and Gil saw, glistening in the sunlight, a great fleet of aerial vessels, flying in formation.

They looked like small silver bullets at their distance.

"The case is on," said Gil. "And they're making greater speed than I thought they could! They'll be able to hear our broadcasts but since they're on our trail, it won't make any difference. Get on the radio, Wilbur! Make contact with Earth and tell them what's happened!"

All personal feelings were swallowed up in the common emergency.

CHAPTER XIV

TIME is only the measuring stick between events whether they occur on Earth, on the moon, or in the vast reaches of space.

In the seven hours since no word had been received from Gil Benson and his two companions, much had happened on Mankind's spinning planet. Sporadic fighting had broken out in Korea and Alaska. It was unofficial, as yet, but battle-scarred Earth was reeling under the initial impact of another world war.

Diplomats, who had exchanged millions of words of charges and counter-charges, now abandoned their oratory, grabbed up their brief cases containing worthless copies of peace documents, and rushed for cover. They had failed, utterly, to reconcile the antagonistic differences of age-old economic interests and savage racial prejudices.

Man's only way of winning an argument with finality was to resort to brute force. His whole bloody evolution could be traced through his weapons of destruction from his bare fists, to a rock, to a club, to a sling-shot, to a bow-and-arrow, to a lance, to a sword, to gunpowder, to a blunder-buss, to a cannon, to a rifle, to a machine gun, to poison gas, to a rocket, and—finally—to the *atomic bomb*. But atomic warfare had not actually, as yet, been tried. Power-

lustful leaders believed that now, at last, Man possessed the destructive means for a merciless aggressor to conquer the entire human race and forever enslave the world.

This was the bright, happy picture confronting all humans as contact was again made, through Schenectady's high frequency station, with three distant travelers from Earth.

"Hello, up there!" greeted Radio Operator Carl Mack, "Are we glad to hear from you! . . . Where are you? . . . What happened?"

"Plenty!" Wilbur reported. "We made a lucky escape, but they're hot on our trail!"

"Who's on your trail?"

"Martians!"

"*Martians!* Don't give us that Orson Welles' stuff!"

"On the level! Here—Gil wants to talk to you!"

Gil's voice came through the loud speaker. "Hello, Mack! . . . I've got to talk fast. Get this—our planet's in danger! We're going to lose it, sure as hell, if we're not careful! . . . These Martians are out to take us over . . . We know too much and they're trying their damndest to keep us from getting back to Earth alive . . . If we don't make it, I want the World to know what it's up against!"

"Okay," said Carl's voice. "So what do you want *me* to do?"

"Get on the short wave and line up the leaders of all the countries! Have them listen in . . . give us the networks . . . get everybody on the radio . . . notify the newspapers . . . We've got a message that will *rock the world!*"

Carl's voice came back from Earth.

"The world's rocked enough now! We're in a terrible turmoil here! . . . *The war's on!*"

Gil's voice came in like a pistol shot.

"*No!* . . . That can't be! . . . We *mustn't* fight! Do what I tell you, Mack! Let *me* talk to those war-makers! Unless they call off this war, *the Earth is doomed!*"

"I'll do the best I can," Carl promised. "But I'm afraid it's too late . . . I'll report back!"

"Good boy! Hurry it up! We can't tell how long we'll be here!"

THE leaders in the different countries of Earth were quite annoyed and disturbed at the emergency summons and urgent pleas from radio stations in the United States to listen in on the special broadcast emanating from the Earth's first space ship, now returning from the Moon and pursued, according to fantastic reports, by a rocket fleet of war-minded Martians!

Enemies of the United States were disposed to consider this communication as an ingenious ruse of some sort but when the same plea was issued through diplomatic channels, a more sober view was taken of the matter. Within an hour after Gil Benson's urgent request had reached Earth, the world's greatest radio audience awaited his message.

"Okay, Gil!" reported Carl Mack. "*The world is yours!*"

"Thanks, old man," said Gil.

The scene on the space ship was tense. All three occupants were keyed to a high state of excitement.

"Hello, Earth!" said the man known best to the world as 'America's Number One Playboy.' "This is Gil Benson speaking to you from space ship 'Good-bye, World,' enroute back to Earth from the Moon.

"I have requested this chance to talk to you, my fellow humans, so that I could warn you of a very terrible and a very real danger. The armed forces of another planet—the planet you've

known as *Mars*—are organized and ready to attack the Earth!

"This is no hoax. This is not another 'War of the Worlds' broadcast—*this is the real thing!*"

"The Martians have been preparing to take over our planet for the past two hundred years. They have the most modern weapons and they are thoroughly entrenched on the other side of the Moon.

"There is only *one* thing that is holding them up. *We* have the *atomic bomb* and they *haven't!*"

"They are waiting for us to destroy ourselves with it—and if you humans are damned fools enough not to stop fighting at once and unite to face this common enemy from space—we'll lose our planet to the Martians!"

"As I'm speaking to you, I can look through the windows of my space ship and see a fleet of at least fifty Martian aerial dreadnoughts following me! So far, thanks to atomic power, I've been able to stay ahead of them. I frankly don't know what will happen when I have to feel my way down through the Earth's atmosphere.

"I appeal to you world leaders, to the heads of the Army and Navy and Air Forces of every country, no matter how opposed, to call off this war at once, adjust your differences, forget your grievances—and pool all resources toward meeting the greatest crisis in all of Earth's history.

"It is not too late to save yourselves if you will. *The greatest immediate blow you can deal the Martians is to put an end to this war—and stop destroying yourselves!*"

"What can any aggressor nation or nations hope to gain if, by conquering the world, *they lose a planet?* And if you leaders are unmoved by my warning and my plea, then I appeal to you, *my fellow humans*, in the name of what

may be left of ordinary humanity and decency and love of whatever freedom you possess, to rise up and see to it that there shall be no more war!"

"These words I speak to you are being heard simultaneously by Martians through their own type of radio equipment, both on the Moon and on Mars. They know that I am returning to Earth with information of the utmost importance and they will do everything possible to prevent my arrival.

"My space ship is unarmed while their huge, man-carrying rockets are heavily gunned. This may, therefore, by my one and only message to you, so I beg you to heed it. This is Gil Benson, now signing off from space ship, 'Goodbye, World!' . . ."

HIS voice had scarcely died out of the ether than the repercussion of what he had said began to be felt everywhere on Earth. Millions of excited humans all over the world scanned the skies with the hope of glimpsing the returning space ship and terrorized at the prospects of seeing an invading Martian fleet.

Carl Mack, contacting Gil from Schenectady, asked: "Have you any idea where you're going to land?"

"I'm aiming for the Eastern seaboard," Gil replied. "Want to get to Washington right away and report my findings. Better alert all the airports—Boston, Philadelphia, New York and Washington. I'll come down at the one most handy, if it's at all possible!"

On board the "Goodbye, World!" the situation was desperate. Approaching, as it was, the Earth's atmosphere, the Martian aerial dreadnoughts dived to the attack.

"This is it!" Gil cried. "Hang on! Get yourselves set! I've got to slow us up! If we hit the Earth's atmosphere at this speed, *we're goners!*"

Diana and Wilbur groped their way to their bunks and strapped themselves in. Gil buckled himself to the control board.

"This may black you out!" he warned. "But I've got to do it!"

Then he pushed the starting lever. The atomic power came on and the ship's downward plunge was checked with a jolt. Blood drained from the heads of all three occupants and, momentarily, they lost consciousness. As they came to, they heard Gil shouting.

"Look! . . . Look, quick! . . . Look at that!" He pointed out the window just as a great flaming mass shot past.

"What's that?" gasped Wilbur.

"It's one of their ships!" exclaimed Gil. "Here comes *another!*"

A second flying meteor-like object went by the window—and *yet another!*

"That's what might have happened to us," Gil cried, "if we hadn't slowed up just in time. But there's plenty more coming and *they're wise*. They won't make the same mistake!"

Martian aerial dreadnoughts loomed up through the Earth's moonless night, their jet-style motors shooting out a blaze of illumination behind them. Gil switched off the lights in his ship in an attempt to avoid detection, also rapidly reducing the velocity as they entered denser and denser atmosphere.

They were down now to a ten mile height above the Earth's surface. In the distance, Diana caught sight of a large area dotted with lights.

"What's that down there?" she asked.

"That," recognized Wilbur, "is little old New York!"

Suddenly, criss-crossing Martian searchlights which fanned the skies, caught them in their full glare. They were immediately struck by a shell which hit amidships beneath the cabin floor, shaking the rocket violently. It

began to fall, half out of control.

"I can't make any airport," Gil cried. "I'll have to set her down wherever I can!"

"Don't land in the ocean!" cried Wilbur, "I can't swim!"

"Oh, for a parachute!" said Diana.

THE Martian aerial vessel which had scored the lucky hit, circled and nosed down for a second attack. As it did so, three high altitude United States Army jet-propulsion pursuit planes flashed through its searchlight beams, firing point-blank.

Diana, Wilbur and Gil gave a yell of delight.

"Who says they can take our planet!" said Wilbur.

There was a great flaming explosion and the Martian dreadnought of the skies went plummeting down past the "Goodbye, World!" to plunge into the ocean, five miles off Rockaway Beach!

The joy of the three space travelers was unbounded.

"They've had enough!" cried Diana. "They're turning back to the Moon!"

In almost no time, the Martian aerial fleet reached an altitude beyond the capacity of Army planes to follow. But they were then fired upon by coastal defense rocket guns, radar operated. One of these salvos found its target and a second Martian aerial battlewagon burst into flames and dived, miles further out, into the sea.

Gil Benson, meanwhile was struggling with his damaged ship. They passed dangerously close above New York's towering sky-scrapers with Gil unable to control its direction, and settled low over the Hudson, skimming the Palisades, missing rooftops and sliding finally down into the flat swamp-land of New Jersey.

"We made it!" said Gil. "We're back again on *good old Mother Earth!*"

"'Home, Sweet, Home'!" said Wilbur.

"And *one sweet landing!*" said Diana.

But Gil did not hear her. He had slumped, exhausted, at the controls.

CHAPTER XV

NEWSPAPER headlines, in morning extras, piled sensation on sensation in telling the incredible but true story of the first human adventure in space. Great black type fairly shouted:

GIL BENSON'S SPACE SHIP LANDS IN JERSEY MEADOWS

THREE OCCUPANTS SHAKEN; UNHURT AFTER MOON VOYAGE

ARMY PLANES FIGHT OFF MARTIAN SPACE ARMADA

WORLD WAR OFF!

EARTH PEOPLES PREPARE TO REPEL SPACE INVASION!

Diana, Wilbur and Gil, rescued from the swamp by excited residents of New Jersey and then rescued from the admiring residents by the police, were taken into New York and put up at the Waldorf-Astoria.

America's Number One Playboy was photographed as he entered America's Number One Hotel. He and his two companions, one a stunning red-head, all attired in evening dress, looked as though they were getting in from a dizzy night's round of New York hot spots. The photographers who met them chortled in high glee and fired away. Then the reporters took over and did some firing of their own.

"Tell us about the Martians!"

"What do they look like?"

"When are they going to attack us?"

"How did they capture you?"

"What did they do to you?"

"How did you escape?"

"Sorry, boys," said Gil, "but you'll have to wait till I give my official report to Washington. However, I can say that we own our lives to Miss Fenimore."

"No, no, Gil!" protested Diana. "Please!"

"How come?" queried reporters.

Gil shook his head. "Guess that will have to wait till later, too."

"Gil's dead on his feet," explained Wilbur. "He's got to get some sleep and get on to Washington. We're all of us all in. Let us go, boys, till we freshen up. We can't think straight."

Three worn-out space travelers walked, glassy-eyed, to the elevator and got off at their floor.

"I'm almost afraid to go to sleep," said Wilbur. "I might dream I was back on the moon!"

Diana stopped at her door. "Good-bye, boys," she said. "It was nice knowing you."

"Be seeing you after my nightmare," called Wilbur.

"Maybe," said Diana, stepping inside and closing the door.

Wilbur looked at Gil. "What did she mean by that?"

Gil laughed, wearily, as he entered his own room. "I don't know and I don't care. Let's get to bed!"

BY LATE afternoon, when Gil Benson had left word that he might be "disturbed," the lobby of the Waldorf-Astoria was filled with a crowd of newspaper reporters, photographers, scientists, government officials, radio executives, theatrical managers, motion picture producers, booking agents, autograph seekers, hero-worshippers, the idly curious—and Ruth Delano, M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation, who had just arrived by special chartered plane from Hollywood, to see "her man from

the moon”!

“Are you and Mr. Benson engaged?” asked an enterprising reporter.

“I prefer to let Mr. Benson answer that question,” Miss Delano replied.

She was stunning in a smart traveling suit, extremely figure-revealing; while her vivid black hair was caught up in a new and exciting coiffure.

“You look very photogenic today,” said one of the camera men.

“I hope so,” said Ruth. “I was afraid you boys wouldn’t look at a girl unless she’d been to the moon!”

There was a sudden stir in the lobby. A young woman with bright red hair, attired in a black-as-night evening gown with half moon and stars design, had just emerged from an elevator.

“There’s the Moon-girl now!” cried someone.

There was a rush in her direction and Ruth Delano was pushed along with the crowd. The two women came face to face.

“Well,” greeted Ruth, “if it doesn’t sound like an old bromide—fancy meeting *you* here!”

“You’ve saved me from making the same original remark,” said Diana.

Newspaper men pushed in as photographers sighted their cameras.

“Listen, Miss Fenimore—Kling Features wants your life story,” called a syndicate man. “*Don’t talk!* We’ll give you fifty thousand for it!”

A booking agent elbowed in, his glasses hanging over one ear. “Hold everything, Miss Fenimore, till you see me! Whatever they offer, I’ll get you *double!*”

“Business seems to be pretty rushing,” remarked Ruth, icily.

“I have nothing to say,” declined Diana, to those pressing her. “I’m not interested.”

“Not so fast, girlie. You can’t high hat us!” said a reporter. “You’re the

hottest glamour girl on Earth and you know it! You can have the world with two fences around it and we can help you get it. So just *give*, girlie—with the intimate details of your trip to the Moon—and we’ll plaster it on the front pages!”

Diana, looking greatly distressed and a little panicky, sought a way of escape.

“This is your first experience with a crowd of admirers, isn’t it, dearie?” said M.G.M.’s pin-up star. “Maybe you’d like to have me handle your press conference?”

Two daggers appeared in Diana’s blue eyes. “I’d like to have you mind your own business!” she said.

A HOWL of delight went up from the newspaper men. If they couldn’t get one story, they’d get another.

“Well, well!” cracked an old-timer. “Gil Benson’s two flames are getting hot! Would you ladies like to put on boxing gloves?”

Ruth Delano relished the scene she had made for herself. “Miss Fenimore is extremely ungrateful,” she purred. “I realize she is under a strain and I only meant to help her.”

“Let me out of here, please,” said Diana. “I have an appointment. There’s nothing I can say. You’ll have to see Mr. Benson.”

“Oh, no! We’ve heard that one before!” came a chorus of protests. “Benson said you saved his life. We want the story. How’d you do it?”

Ruth Delano laughed. “*She* saved Gil’s life? Don’t you believe it! Gil’s a perfect gentleman. He’s just made up a yarn to save that red-head’s face. I haven’t forgotten how she threw me out of the rocket, slammed the door as I tried to get back in—and then the thing took off! If you want a *real* story, boys, let her explain how *that*

happened!"

"Yeah, Miss Delano, you've got something there!" replied a reporter. "You mean—the whole thing was *pre-meditated*?"

Ruth eyed Diana. "*Could be,*" she said. "I've thought so from the start. And Buzz Reynolds—he's the head of that Flying Circus that she used to be with—he says it would be just like her to pull a stunt like that."

It is said that a red-head can take only so much without blowing its top. Diana blew hers.

"All right!" she raged. "So I *deliberately* started the rocket! So I risked Gil Benson's life and Wilbur's and my own! So I did it just to make a name for myself! So we got to the Moon and back again *alive*, anyway! So you're jealous and trying to make me look bad! . . . So *what are you going to do about it?*"

Ruth Delano had reached the climax of her scene.

"I don't have to do anything about it, dearie," she soothed. "*You've just done it to yourself!*"

Diana made a desperate break for it and fought her way through the crowd, calling on the aid of two house-detectives to get her to the street and a taxi cab. She was followed by a string of photographers who photographed her in flight, but she left newspapermen and all at the curb, wildly entreating her to "make a statement for the press."

* * *

Wilbur Williams awakened with his telephone bell tinkling. He reached over sleepily and took the receiver off the hook. He had arranged, after four p.m. to have all calls for Gil Benson or Diana routed to him, as their representative.

"This is me," he said. "Who are you?"

"*Wilbur, dear!*" said a feminine voice. "How are you, *darling!*"

Wilbur was waking up. "Do my eyes deceive me or is this Miss Delano of M.G.M.? And when did you get in—and what could *possibly* have brought you to New York?"

The voice on the wire was syrupy. "Now, Wilbur, don't be so naive, which you're not. There are ten thousand people down here in the lobby, more or less, waiting to see Gil. The best I could do was get the management to let me put through the first phone call. I must see him right away!"

"Excuse me a minute," said Wilbur. "The valet's just here with some new clothes for Gil and me. I don't think Gil's awake yet. Give me ten minutes and come up to the reception room on this floor. I'll get you in to see him."

"*Wilbur!*" cried Ruth. "You're an angel!"

"No," said Hollywood's greatest press agent. "I'm a *devil*—and I wish you luck!"

Five minutes later, Gil Benson was awakened by a rap on his door.

"Who's there?" he called.

"*The Other Man from the Moon!*" said a voice.

Gil looked around the hotel room to get his bearings. Then he got up drunkenly and opened the door. Wilbur came in, completely outfitted in his new street clothes, a dapper gray suit, blue shirt and red tie. He handed a suit to Gil.

"Pretty good fit for ordering over the phone," he said. "I hope we got the right sizes for *you*."

Gil broke the box open and laid out the clothes.

"I feel like I'm about half here," he said. "It's hard to believe we've really been to the Moon—and that Martians

are more than a bad dream. Did you get me a Pullman for Washington tonight?"

"Yeah, I got it," said Wilbur. "How long do you expect to be there?"

"I'll fly back tomorrow night. Jerry Torrence ought to be here by that time to take charge of digging our ship out of that swamp. Say—don't forget to pick up our Moon photographs. Are they going to have them developed and printed so I can take them to Washington with me?"

"That's what the studio said," Wilbur reported. "They put all their other orders aside and have the whole force working on it."

Gil stepped into his new trousers. "I guess these are going to be all right," he said. "The way I feel now, I'm through with formal clothes for life!"

"Me, too," said Wilbur. "I wouldn't even be buried in evening dress!"

There was the sound of a telephone bell ringing and ringing, down the hall.

"You're getting lots of calls," said Wilbur. "But I'm not there to answer them."

Gil laughed. "That's okay," he said. "There are very few people I want to see, anyway."

Wilbur had been waiting for this opening. "There's *one* person I imagine you'd like to see," he suggested, "if you could!"

"Who's that?" Gil asked.

"Ruth Delano, she's in the reception room, on this floor, right now."

GIL'S face lighted. "She *is*?" He stuffed his shirt inside his trousers. "Well, bring her in! What are you waiting for?"

"For you to get your pants on!" Wilbur grinned.

"Wait!" called Gil, as Wilbur went for the door. "Did you wake Diana?"

"Not yet," said Wilbur. "I thought

I'd let her sleep for awhile. The poor kid was more beat up than we were."

Gil looked at his wrist watch. "You'll have to get her up. Didn't you date *Saks* to send over some new clothes for her to select from, at four-thirty?"

"Oh!" said Wilbur. "Oh, yes! . . . Don't worry about that, Gil. I'll take care of it . . . I'll send in Miss Delano right away."

Hollywood's greatest press agent hurried out as Gil turned toward the full length mirror and put on his tie.

M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation was pacing impatiently up and down the small reception room, just off the elevator bays.

"That's a pretty long ten minutes," she said to Wilbur, when he appeared.

"I had to wait until Gil got dressed," he said. "*After all* . . .!" Wilbur straightened a fancy handkerchief in his suit coat pocket. "We've both got on new outfits. How do you think I look?"

"That's beside the point," said Ruth. "How do you think *I* look?"

Wilbur gave her the critical once-over.

"I could kiss you myself," he said, "if I had the time. No kidding, Miss Delano—I think you're just what Gil Benson ordered!"

"That's all I wanted to hear," said Ruth. "Where is he?"

Wilbur pointed down the hall. "He's in Twenty-seven-eleven."

"What a number!" said Ruth.

"He sure *is*!" said Wilbur.

M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation took her perfect figure in Gil's direction. Wilbur followed, admiring her rear view.

"If she only had red hair," he said to himself. "But, I guess there's only one Diana!"

* * *

There was a lady-like tap on Gil Ben-

son's door.

"Come in!" he said.

The door swung open and, framed in it, was the life-sized, flesh-and-blood picture of Hollywood's most glamorous pin-up girl. She stood there for a moment to let her one-man-audience ogle her form.

"Ruth!" said Gil. "It's *wonderful* to see you!"

"Oh, Gil, my darling!" She pushed the door shut behind her and rushed into his arms.

They kissed and she clung to him. "I've been so worried about you. I've lost *five pounds*!"

Gil laughed. "I had to go to the Moon to get you to do that? You're better looking than ever!"

"You mean, you don't miss the five pounds, Darling?"

Gil encircled her waist. "Just a trifle," he said. "I believe I can hug you a little tighter!"

She kissed him again and left a nice smudge of lipstick. Gil stroked her hair.

"Oh, oh! *Don't touch!* I can't put that up myself—and if we're photographed together . . .!"

Gil eyed her. "Are you *acting* or do you *really* mean it?"

"Why, of course I mean it! Do you think I'd have flown clear across the country just to see you . . . stopped production and everything . . . if I didn't love you. . . ?"

Gil spoke slowly. "Yes," he said. "I believe you *would*!"

Ruth sat down on the arm of a chair, her face registering pain.

"Why, Gil! How can you say that? I naturally want to look my best when I'm with you, dear . . . but I still have my public . . . I can't forget that . . . and since you're so much in the lime-light at present . . . we mustn't be caught off guard."

"No, of course not," said Gil. "We should have a make-up man here to fix your lips after each kiss . . . and a hair-dresser to comb your hair . . . and a dressmaker to be sure I haven't wrinkled your dress every time I put my arm around you. I don't think I like that kind of romance!"

"Now, Gil, darling!" pleaded Ruth. "I didn't mean it the way it sounded. If you don't mind the way I look in public, why just forget my hair, my lips—everything!"

She offered herself to be kissed.

Gil took her in his arms and placed a hand on her hair. She shuddered and drew back.

"You see?" he said. "It's no good. It would never work. You're absolutely right—you *can't forget your public!*"

Ruth burst into tears. "Gil! You're being cruel! Now look what you're making me do! . . . You say I don't love you . . . that I'm just after publicity . . . How can you say that after the way that red-head has acted? *She's* the one who's come between us . . . Of all the shameless, cheap, brazen things for a girl to do! . . . *I've got a reputation—my name means something.* Our marriage would be the talk of the country . . . I do love you, Gil . . . I do, I do . . .!"

GIL looked at her, unmoved. "You love the idea of the publicity our amalgamation would bring—but, for us, it wouldn't be a marriage—it would be a *business proposition*."

There was a sudden excited rap on the door. Ruth nervously ran to the mirror and commenced to dab at her face.

"Who is it?" asked Gil.

The door opened. "It's me," said Wilbur. He had a sealed envelope in his hand. "The people from *Saks* are here but Diana's not in her room! I

found this envelope addressed to you." Wilbur sighted Ruth wiping the tear stains from her face. "Excuse me, Miss Delano—but I thought this might be something important!"

"Don't mind me!" snapped Ruth. "Especially if it has anything to do with *Miss Fenimore!*"

Gil slit the envelope open and took out a note.

"Damn-it-to-hell!" he said.

Ruth stared at him, wonderingly.

"What's the matter?" asked Wilbur, "anything wrong?"

"There's plenty wrong!" said Gil, restraining his feelings with difficulty. "I'm going to read you this, Ruth, because it makes you eat your own words about a certain party." He fixed his eyes on the note and continued. "*'Dear Gil:—This is your show. I butted in on it at the start and now I'm running out on it at the end. This wasn't a circus stunt—it was a real scientific achievement. I hope I haven't spoiled it for you . . . Diana.'*"

There was a moment of painful silence.

Ruth stood up. "If I had her wrong, Gil, I'm terribly sorry. Of course, that could be a *grandstand play* . . ."

Gil's jaws tightened. "Goodbye, Ruth," he said. "*Your public is waiting!*"

M.G.M.'s pin-up sensation went out the door.

"Wilbur," said Gil. "You find Diana for me or I'll break every bone in your head!"

Wilbur looked at Gil, disconsolately. "I've only got *one*," he said, "and it's *one solid piece!*"

GIL BENSON flew back from Washington after a day closeted with the President, the cabinet, high military officials, scientists and representatives of all foreign countries. The confidential report he gave them of his ex-

periences on the Moon, substantiated by remarkable aerial photographs, particularly of the Martians' Moon City, profoundly impressed his hearers and produced immediate action toward setting up every possible defense against attack from space.

"I recommend," Gil Benson had told them, "the establishment of terminal stations in space at a height of above five hundred miles above the Earth, where a state of equilibrium exists, enabling such great floating islands to revolve perpetually around our planet. These great platforms will act as tiny Earth-bound satellites.

"If we place these in space at equal distances around the Earth, each platform or terminal possibly three miles in diameter, we can use them to dock our huge space ships in the coming traffic between the Moon and other planets. We can also store atomic bomb rockets there, as launching sites for repelling any attempted space invasion.

"These terminals would circle indefinitely in frictionless, weightless and airless space. Once established, it is going to be necessary for the united people of our world to invade our side of the Moon and either make friends with the Martians or drive them off. Otherwise, because of their own desperate situation, they will prove an increasing menace.

"This will be particularly true, if and when they learn how to create atomic power, because of the great quantity of Uranium on the Moon. We must get there before they gain this knowledge and control the Moon and its Uranium deposits for ourselves. If we don't, gentlemen, with no pun intended, it will be 'Goodbye, World!'"

SCIENTISTS who had already been planning and designing such terminal stations, highly approved of Gil

Benson's recommendations, as did those engaged in atomic research.

But Gil, with the world clamoring for an opportunity to honor him, had but one thought in mind, once he had left Washington. Arriving back at the Waldorf, he went immediately to the room of Wilbur Williams, whom he found with three telephones installed and talking on two of them at once.

"Hello, Gil!" greeted Wilbur. "How'd you make out. . . ? Just a minute!" Then into one of the phones: "No, Mr. Benson wouldn't be interested. He's not endorsing anything." He looked up at Gil. "It's been this way ever since you've been gone. You could make millions and I have to turn it all down!" He spoke into the other phone. "No, it's not enough—I'll only let Miss Fenimore make one *'Moon Picture'*—and she's got to get ten thousand a week. . . !"

Gil broke in. "Get off that damn phone!" he shouted. "Listen to me! Have you located Diana?"

Wilbur hung up and all three phones started ringing. He took all receivers off and dropped them on the floor.

"No, Gil—I'm sick. I've got Burns and Pinkerton both trying to trace her. They turned up the cab driver who took her from the hotel. He said he let her out at Macy's . . . and a girl in the Women's Ready-to-Wear said she waited on her, sold her a gray suit and she changed right there. The dick said, since she appears to be hiding out, that she may have dyed her hair!"

"If she's dyed her hair, I'll kill her," said Gil.

"I wouldn't like it, either," said Wilbur.

The two men looked at each other. Gil eyed Wilbur with sudden suspicion.

"See here!" he said. "You're not, by any chance, behind Diana's run-out?"

"Me?" said Hollywood's greatest

press agent. "I should say not!"

"Let's not kid each other," said Gil. "*You love her, too!*"

"I don't need any truth serums to admit that," said Wilbur.

There followed an awkward moment.

"Well," said Gil, where do we go from here?"

Wilbur shrugged his shoulders, helplessly.

The phones were making strange, protesting noises with the receivers still on the floor. He reached down and picked two of them up, placing one to each ear.

"State your business!" he said.

"What's the matter? Why don't you answer your phone?" said an angry voice.

"Hollywood calling," said an operator.

"I'll take Hollywood," said Wilbur, and dropped the other receiver. "Who's calling?"

"Ruth Delano—calling Gil Benson," said the operator.

"Tell her I'm not here," said Gil. "I'm going out and look for Diana myself."

Wilbur held up his hand. "Take it easy!" he warned. "You'll get yourself a lot of publicity you don't want. I told the papers Diana had a nervous breakdown and is in a private sanitarium for a few days." He spoke into the phone. "Put Miss Delano on!"

"I won't talk to her," Gil insisted.

"Hello, Gil?" said Ruth's voice.

"No," replied Wilbur, "it's me!"

"Oh, hello, Willie! I've got to speak to Gil right away. It's very important!"

Wilbur looked at Gil who shook his head. "He's very busy right now. He wants to know—can I take the message?"

"No," said Ruth. "But tell him I've got some information about that *red-head!*"

"YOU'VE *what* . . . ?" cried Wilbur. He put his hand over the mouthpiece. "She says she knows something about Diana. You'd better get on the line."

"She's kidding," said Gil, "just to get to talk to me." But he took the receiver. "Hello," he said.

"Hello—hello, Gil. Are you still sore at me?"

"You calling long distance to find that out?"

There was a pause—and a sob on the phone. "No, Gil—I was just calling to find out if you knew the whereabouts of Miss Fenimore. . . . ?"

Gil drew in a deep breath. "Not yet," he said.

"Well, *I* do!" Ruth replied. "I ran into her at the airport when I was taking off. She was with Buzz Reynolds. They were flying somewhere in his plane."

Gil had held the receiver from his ear so that Wilbur could get this same information.

"Well, I'm a son-of-a-gun!" said Wilbur. "What do you know about that?!"

"Ruth, I don't know how to thank you," said Gil. "You're swell!"

"Wait!" cried Wilbur. "Don't let her hang up! I want to speak to her!"

Gil handed over the receiver.

"Say, Ruth!" said Hollywood's greatest press agent. "You told me, some time ago, you'd let me do your publicity . . . I'd like to see you when I get back to Hollywood. How about dinner at Sardi's . . . *just us two?*"

"Why, Wilbur—I think that would be nice!" said Ruth.

"After all," said Wilbur. "I want to impress you that you're going out with somebody important. I was the *second man on the Moon!*"

Ruth laughed. "I can hardly wait," she said, "and I *mean it!*"

She hung up and Wilbur sat looking

off into space. "She doesn't have *red hair*," he said, "But then, I guess a guy like me can't have everything!" He looked around. "Hey, Gil!" he called. "Well, I'll be damned! . . . *He's gone!*"

* * *

Buzz Reynolds had a wife and two kids and a summer place on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. He also had his own private airfield.

It was early morning when he heard the motor of a high speed plane circling overhead and coming in for a landing. Buzz kicked his feet into some slippers, pulled a sweater over his pajamas and went outside.

"Must be some airman in trouble," he said to his wife.

Walking out back, Reynolds saw a handsome appearing man in a new suit of clothes striding toward him.

"Hello, Reynolds!" he greeted. "I know she's here, so don't try to cover up. Trot her out!"

"Who are you talking about?" stalled Reynolds.

"Your red-head parachute jumper!" said Gil Benson. "I might have suspected you'd be after her!"

Buzz Reynolds was short and stocky. He buttoned his sweater around him to keep out the cool morning breeze.

"I didn't go after her," he protested. "She phoned me long distance; begged me to come and get her. She was crying . . . she's a swell kid . . . what else could I do?"

"That's okay," said Gil. "But I want to talk to her."

"She's not up yet," said Reynolds. "And you're not going to take her away from me now. She's going back with me next season . . . She's cooked up one of the most sensational parachute jumping stunts ever pulled! . . . We're go-

ing to have a rocket built and shoot her up in it to a height of ten miles . . . Then it breaks open and she makes a parachute drop—in a *space suit!*”

Gil laughed. “That was *her* idea?” he asked.

“Honest to God!” swore Reynolds.

“I wouldn’t let her do a thing that *dangerous*,” said Gil.

“And just what have you got to say about it?” said a voice.

Gil Benson looked around into a pair of blue, blue eyes.

“Thank God!” he exclaimed.

“For *what?*” asked Diana.

“That you didn’t dye that red hair!”

“I thought you weren’t up yet,” said Reynolds.

“I can’t ever stay in bed when I hear a plane,” said Diana.

“If you don’t mind,” said Gil, pointedly. “Miss Fenimore and I are going to take a nice morning walk in your woods.”

Reynolds grinned. “And if *you* don’t mind,” he replied. “I’m going to get back under the covers. It’s damned

chilly out here.”

The first man and woman from Earth to land on the Moon walked slowly down the path into the woods. Nature was just waking up. The birds of the forest were singing their morning songs.

“I’ve always liked red hair,” Gil said, as the blue eyes looked up at him. “And, while I’m not a Martian, I’d greatly appreciate your aid in conducting a little experiment.”

Diana smiled. “What kind?” she asked.

“I need a wife and a home,” Gil proposed. “And I’d like to see if, in time, there might be some little *red-heads* to go with it!”

There was the light of the morning sun in Diana’s blue eyes.

“I think, Mr. Benson, that I could devote myself to that experiment with great enthusiasm!”

The Moon and the Martians seemed very far away in that moment—and the Earth seemed very sweet.

America’s Number One Bachelor had surrendered his title.

MAXWELL'S DEMON



By ANTHONY B. OTT



J AMES CLERK MAXWELL, formulator of radio’s famed Maxwell’s equations, outstanding thermodynamicist, and superb British physicist, gave to physics an ingenious concept—Maxwell’s demon. It was only a concept—never a reality—but something has come up recently that makes it appear as if the little “devil” is here to stay. That “something” is known as the Hilsch tube.

Maxwell pointed out that temperature is actually the measure of the quantity of energy of motion—the average energy, that is—that a gas may possess. In his day, it was realized that a gas consisted of billions of molecules, somewhat like hard little spheres, all moving at random with varying velocities ranging from high to low. Energy added to the gas in the form of heat sped up the molecules; energy subtracted from the gas by refrigeration slowed down the molecules. Temperature was merely a number describing the

average amount of energy possessed by the slowly and rapidly moving molecules.

It was particularly important to note that in a gas at a given temperature, the molecules were not *all* moving at the same speed. As they collided with each other and with the walls of their container, they did so with speeds ranging from that of a rifle bullet to practically motionlessness. Nevertheless the energy content of the gas could be accurately described by considering the average, the mean, of all these speeds, and calling it the temperature.

In order to make these ideas very clear, Maxwell used a graphic little picture, purely a mental image, that showed that it was conceivable to separate the molecules of varying velocities. In practice he knew that this could never be done, but it clarified the idea of average energy to many.

Suppose (Maxwell wrote) that we had a chamber divided into two sections, one of which con-

tained a gas—any gas—at some temperature, the other of which contained nothing—a vacuum. In the section containing the gas, the molecules are moving around at random, some at high speed, some at low, colliding with each other and with the walls of the chamber. This is the normal state of any gas.

NOW suppose there is a hole in the wall dividing the vessel into two chambers but that there is a door, a minute door covering it. Stationed at this door is a little "demon." Every time the demon sees a high-speed molecule headed for the door, he opens it and permits the molecule to pass into the vacuum-chamber; every time he sees a low-speed molecule headed for the door, he shuts it and prevents it from entering the vacuum-chamber. After some time and a few billion operations, enough high-speed molecules will have entered the vacuum-chamber so that no longer can it be called a vacuum. Instead we will now have two chambers, one with all the low-speed molecules, the other with all the high-speed molecules.

In other words we will have separated the gas into two gases differing extremely in temperature. Because the temperature is the measure of the average kinetic energy of the moving molecules, and because we have on one hand low-kinetic energy molecules, on the other, high kinetic-energy molecules, we have effectively, decreased and increased the temperature of our two portions of gas.

This is a fine idea. In fact it is beautiful, but there is one catch.

It couldn't possibly work! Where could such a nice little demon be gotten? Who could possibly devise anything to open and close that little door rapidly enough? All that Maxwell's demon ever served to do, was to make the concept of average kinetic energy a little clearer to a multitude of students.

Then—

Out of a clear sky, *Fortune* magazine announced a few months ago that Maxwell's demon, or something very akin to it had been found!

When the teams of U. S. scientists scoured Germany for technical talent and ideas developed during the war, Dr. Milton of Johns Hopkins, one of the members of the team, brought back to the United States a clever little gadget, a gadget that may have a great deal of significance, a device that may revolutionize heating and refrigeration, not to mention any number of other technical fields.

THE gadget is called a "Hilsch" tube after the name of the inventor, a German physicist, Dr. Hilsch.

In appearance it is quite simple. It is merely a metal tube about twenty inches long, about a half inch in diameter, and split into a pair of arms of unequal diameter by a small right-angle jet to one side of the center of the tube.

Compressed air is fed to the jet. Within a few seconds, things begin to happen. One of the arms

—the wider one—begins to heat up! The other—the narrower one—begins to cool!

Note that there is nothing else involved except a pump to force air through the single arm. The compressed air strikes a steel spiral near the jet and apparently, like Maxwell's hypothetical demon, separates the gas into high and low-speed molecules. This can be done with any gas, ranging from compressed air to hydrogen!

The temperature of the cold arm goes down to —56° Fahrenheit; the hot arm goes up to plus 350° Fahrenheit.

Every scientist that has seen the gadget immediately tried to explain it. The Bureau of Standards has evolved a long, elaborate mathematical explanation; individual technicians have various explanations—unfortunately nobody is quite sure yet what the real explanation is.

Regardless of how the device functions, its implications are terrific. Can you imagine an apparatus which delivers either heat or refrigeration or both at the touch of a button with no other equipment but a pump driven by an electric motor?

Naturally every manufacturer of heating and refrigerating equipment is interested. Already we hear comments to the effect that it is "impractical" and that it is "inefficient" and that it will be unable to replace conventional unit. This, of course, is natural, but if the device is at all worth-while, in spite of the natural hesitancy of the average industrialist, we are likely to see the thing in operation.

ASIDE from the uses of Hilsch's tube, which is the only name given it so far, the most interesting aspects of it, are these—how and why does it work?

We can't consider the mathematical explanations which involve discussions of vortices and centrifugal force, etc. One explanation maintains that the steel spiral hurls the high speed molecules to its rim leaving the slower speed molecules to furnish the low temperature, which is siphoned off into one arm of the tube.

Someday, regardless of whether the gadget is adequately explained or not, it is conceivable that we may have in our homes, a special form of the Hilsch tube, which will provide all our heating and refrigeration. A flick of a button, the whine of an electric motor, the throb of a rotary pump—and presto, we have ice-cubes for the drink to toast Dr. Hilsch. Or the same sequence of events, and we have a hot grille for that sizzling steak. Like so many things that have appeared absolutely impossible, the Hilsch tube is making many a scientist think twice before he says anything is impossible.

Almost any technician would have laughed at the thought of a practical and real "Maxwell's Demon," just as he would have laughed a few years ago at the thought of a moon rocket. Strangely enough, the laughter is considerably subdued these days.

SCIENTIFIC



Tiahuanaco, high in the Andes, is one of the most interesting ruins in the world. Was it the site of legendary "first sun" from whom the Incas claim to have descended. They have claimed to have been driven out by a foreign power, then many ages later, returned to the ruins, and agreeing that this was the place "the sun first appeared." What did they mean?

The hoary antiquity of Tiahuanaco supercedes even that of Egypt. Yet no expedition has been sent to the site to uncover its secrets. Pozensky, greatest living authority on the ancient ruin, claims that it was abandoned in 9,550 B.C. If correct, then Tiahuanaco must have flourished many centuries before that time, being incredibly old.

What is most amazing about this great city is the fact (as claimed by Pozensky) that it was a seaport! Imagine, if you can, a seaport located 13,000 feet above sea level. If Tiahuanaco was a seaport, at sea level, as indicated by the great canals in it, then the mountains in which it now rests were not mountains 12,000 years ago. What havoc that plays with geologists who have claimed ages of millions of years for the Andes! We would have to revise our whole scientific concept of the earth if so. Is that why science hesitates to explore this city?



MYSTERIES

THE SUN-MOON WAR

By L. TAYLOR HANSEN

The legend of a great war between the sun and the moon is so persistent in ancient Indian lore that it presents a baffling mystery.

AROUND the campfire on cold nights, from the Lodges of the Blackfeet to the Kivas of the Pueblos, when the story-teller starts to weave his magic of "long-ago and afar-off," many a legend begins—"Once, long before the memories of our grandfathers, the Sun and Moon clashed in battle—a war which lasted for generations. . . ."

The first time one hears the story it is a childish myth. The second time, one hears it as a garbled repetition of what one has listened to before. The third, fourth and fifth times, one begins to cast about for an explanation of the similarities. If these stories had varied endings, one might be justified in regarding them as the fanciful embroidery of Amerind imagination nurtured by a fitful fire, and an attentive audience. Yet there can be but one ending for this never-to-be-forgotten struggle. Every tribe will assure you that the moon won. Then it is that the legend begins to take on the qualities of a race-memory—the last vestiges of some titanic conflict which echoes down the ages in the form of this allegory from a long-forgotten past.

Possibly related to this story in some, as yet, unknown manner, and certainly as widely distributed, are the persistent connections of the moon with The Spider, and sometimes with The Wolf; or again, that strange legend of the vast, underground caverns through which the people wandered when the nations came out into the upper world. This latter story, centering in The Pueblos, is spread through many tribes, even spilling into Algonquin legend, where it has lost all of its vividness.

It is toward the south that the stories take on an added realism. The war becomes a true clash of the calendars, while many ruins teem with tales of caverns and underground passageways. The spade of the excavator, will in time, doubtless, settle the location of this ancient war. Yet in the meantime, with the probable sites still completely unexplored, we shall have to depend for what knowledge we may glean of the locations, upon the more uncertain clues of racial type, language and legend. Also having discovered what we have of the close affinity between North America, Mexico and Central America, let

us carry our investigations into South America and see what we can learn which might clarify the dark corners, and throw a few searching beams of light upon the long corridors of the past.

In the first place, South America seems to hold three racial types, although all are in a stage of deep inter-mixture. Some of this inter-mixture is caused by the laws of the jungle which deem it a disgrace to marry in your own tribe. Therefore, it is etiquette to steal your wife from a neighbor tribe, even though that tribe is your hereditary enemy, and your people dwell in a state of constant war with them. Since strong patrilinear systems are also the order of the day in Matto Grosso, this goes a long way toward making a happy home since one dispenses with his in-law problem at its inception.

Nevertheless, in general, South America is a continent of round-heads, many of whom carry a strong Pacific culture. It is only way back in the jungles that one finds some tribes of long-heads, and the strong taboo upon marrying them, or in fact, having any intercourse with them other than to make slaves of them, seems to point to an ancient conquest. They are to be found far up on the headwaters of the rivers, where apparently they have been driven by succeeding waves of invasion up the waters of The Amazon. These people, who call themselves the "Maki" apparently to connect themselves with Chan-Chan which is on a river by a similar name. This claim seems to be strengthened by their name of "Pogsa" given to them by surrounding tribes, which in the Quichua tongue of the Incan Empire, meant "Moon."¹

The third type of South American Indian is the red-skinned disharmonic with long head and wide, high cheekbones. The type is islanded in the very high Andes, a distinctly refugee location. They carry many Algonkin characteristics. The other location of the red-skinned disharmonic is, of course, the northeast shoulder of the continent where evidently wave after wave has rippled out from the Caribbean.

Originally, the disharmonic of South America

¹ The Pogsa are confined to the territory between the Rio Negro and the Rio Japura.

probably came from the northern reservoir of the type, but the migration may have been as long ago as the ice age when larger tracts of desirable land for settlement were available in the Caribbean. That the reverse migration dates from the dessication of these island-benches when the water once locked up in the ice-sheets was returned to the oceans, raising the level, and disturbing the delicate land-and-water balance is possible. At any rate the similarities of the cultures which have seemed to invade both the Mississippi and the Matto Grosso from this direction, has caused some interesting discussions.²

Apparently a few geological changes have taken place since that time, which in order correctly to dress our stage for the succeeding migrations, we must attempt to understand. In the first place, both Central and South America once lay lower in the water, and this is not only evident in Yucatan and Guatemala where every inch of the higher ground is terraced for cultivation and covered with ruined cities, but from the reports of the Indians the same is true in the jungles of Brazil, or rather, beyond the jungles. On both continents therefore, we find either a sparsity of ruins in what are now the lowlands, or else, ruins of a comparatively recent (relatively speaking) date. The ruins which we do find in the lowlands suggest that they were once built in a marshy country, thus necessitating the raising of the temples and pyramids upon platforms to get them out of the water. Possibly the houses may have been built of wood upon stilts and the travel, as in Tenochtitlan (Mexico City) of a thousand years later, took place largely upon lagoons in canoes.

Although the lowland cities are problematical, and the question as to whether a great arm of the sea once reached Lake Peten in Guatemala, making of it and its splendid ruins a desirable land-locked harbor which would be cherished by a maritime people, is a debatable subject, yet the high Andes seem to offer additional argument for geological change since the first occupation by civilized man.

LAKE TITICACA once apparently supported many cities—or perhaps just one—the giant metropolis of Tiahuanaco, and yet today, it is at too high an altitude to grow either fruit or grain. Furthermore, judging by the ruins, the lake was once much larger and extended some two miles beyond its present borders. If this was the site of the first Sun Empire, then apparently its hinterland was dessicated by cold as badly as the island-benches in the Caribbean were dessicated by a continual shrinkage of the surface left above the water.

² See *Southern Contacts of the Indians North of the Gulf of Mexico*, Internat. Congr. Americanists, Rio de Janeiro 1922 20:53-59, 1924 by J. R. Swanton. Also P. Rivet, *L'orfeverie precolombienne des Antilles*, Jour. Soc. Americanistes de Paris.

One fact seems definitely to counter the theory that Titicaca, or The Andes were ever lower than their present height. That is that the glacial moraines of the Pleistocene were somewhat lower than they are at present. To get around this, Poznansky postulates that Tiahuanaco dates from the last interglacial. This would certainly give it the crown of earth's oldest city, making it contemporary with such regions of legendary antiquity as Plato's Atlantis, and the lost civilizations which once existed upon Africa's sunken rim. The Bolivian savant probably knows more about the subject of Tiahuanaco than any living man, but his ideas are too "romantic" for the average archaeologist of North America. Yet they cannot challenge his views because as yet, Tiahuanaco is an unexplored site.

Two facts lead one to suspect that this might have been the site of the legendary "First Sun." One is that the Incas who called themselves "Children of The Sun," claim to have been driven out by a foreign power. They further declare that after wandering for many ages first toward the south and then in the forests of the north, their wise men brought them back to their legendary homeland. After a consultation at the Lake of Titicaca, their sages agreed that this was the place "where the Sun first appeared." They then led the Incas a trifle further to the North where they built their capital at Cuzco, another ruined city of the ancients, and began their march to power.

One of the unsolved mysteries connected with the hoary antiquity of Tiahuanaco, is the relation of the island Aruakians with its site. A dialect of Aruakian is spoken in the immediate environs of the mysterious capital, although the main body of these red-skinned disharmonics are located in the high Andes, hundreds of miles away.

Nor are these all the facts surrounding this fascinating people which claim the attention. We have the strange feeling as we move among these rapidly disappearing people, of being with the haughty Algonkins of our Northern Forests. We meet Algonkin traits on every hand—particular interest in bird decorations, babies in cradleboards, laced up with buckskin, exposure of dead followed by secondary burial, a similar costume and tobacco in stone pipes. Even the Algonkin method of mixing their tobacco with the shavings of certain sacred woods and their ceremonial manner of puffing the smoke to the four directions are present.³

Was this the site of the legendary "first kingdom" from which "The Twins" were dispelled by the invasion of a foreign power? If so, there must have been an earlier war than the Sun-Moon War, for Spider-Grandmother, or as some tribes have it, The Moon, raised "The Twins" and took care of them until adulthood when they set about

³ The Aruakian trait of plucking out the hair of the eyebrows is duplicated among the Iroquois, especially The Senecas of our east coast.

a belated revenge.

Could this earlier enemy power have been one of old Pacific Malayan affinities, or the Votanic Invasion from The Atlantic? Or was the Sun-Moon War fought between the Sun or Eldest Twin and the Moon-Wolf allied in a battle which lasted for generations and whose original alignment was forgotten by the later and more dominating Dragon invasion from the Atlantic, when The Dragon became the enemy of all three?

Or was the Moon-power a late entrant into the arena of the Americas, and the real Sun-Moon War of another global location the echoes of which reached the Americas, and only became widespread after the Moon-power of The Spider Totem had begun to move toward many conquests upon the southern continent of The Americas?

Like the antiquity of Tiahuanaco, The Sacred Lake of old Titicaca, where it is said that the "Sun was first seen" and "Corn was first grown," yet where today, no corn grows except a curious little berry-variety because of the great 13,000 feet elevation, must also remain one of the strangest mysteries of science.

If Potsdam University was correct in its finding that the sun-temple of Tiahuanaco, which, for some unaccountable reason was abandoned in the midst of its construction, was intended to act as a great sidereal clock, and was constructed for

the star which was a pole star in 9,550 B.C. then Poznansky has a strong scientific argument in favor of his theory that this was the date of Tiahuanaco's final abandonment, and not its construction.

Such a hoary antiquity, beyond anything which Egypt can offer, makes us wonder why our universities have never sent an archaeological expedition to uncover its untouched mounds, and lay bare its traces of great canals, constructed at the time when, as Poznansky insists, it was one of the world's mightiest ports. A port thirteen thousand feet high? Is such a thing possible? Yet until we have more facts upon which to base our beliefs either pro or con upon the subject of Ancient Tiahuanaco, we must suspend our judgment.

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PITY THE NON-CONCEPTIONIST!

IT SEEMS only a couple of days ago that I furtively darted in to Burmeister's Drug Store and innocently scanned the magazine rack for the latest copy of *Amazing Stories*. When I was anxious enough to ask where it was, or was it out yet, the clerk couldn't be expected to know. That was all a number of years ago when men were mostly too "serious-minded" to think. Space ships, said the average person and especially the average scientist, and most especially the average scientific magazine, are fundamentally and literally impossible. If you indiscreetly used those two short words together, it was expected that you must have been a "salt-picker" escaped from Ringling Brothers, or at least a candidate for the turnip diet in a booby hatch. Isn't it simply marvelous to be able to behold the stolidity with which the average "world-beater" accepts the fulfillment of the dreams of the men who develop the concepts?

I shall never forget the objections of fuel-weight to the operation of such a vehicle as the space ship. The type of person who raised that objection was the same type that raised a questioning eye-brow at Robert Fulton, and vowed that sky-scrappers would fall down of their own weight, and swore at the Wright Brothers' experiments with envious and hateful oaths. And then there was the space radiation objection, and the meteor objection, and the question of whether the body could stand the conditions of space navigation in general.

It takes a man like Major P. de Seversky to get the credit from the average person for artificial gravity in space vessels. When I first hid a science-fiction magazine from my mother, I understood such necessities. Doubtless most people who read this understood them long ago. Of course, Major, it is very necessary to keep on telling people about things like this, because if air-mindedness doesn't get you, space-consciousness should!

My mother found that first science-fiction mag down in the basement. She was about as regular a fellow as you'd like, but I distinctly recall the look on her face when she told my father and asked him what was going to become of me. Well, I guess this is it, but what worries me more than it ought to is what in the name of reason is going to become of the many who can never see a millimeter in front of them?

There is probably no man more to be pitied than the man with a closed mind, unless it is the man who is completely devoid of conceptions of the things about him. It is really too bad to feel that way about some of our own kind, but it might not be so necessary if they could keep their lips buttoned about who the really goofy ones are.

In ancient Persia (Iran) a loose-jawed philosopher once remarked, "A wise man believes anything until it is disproved. Only a fool refuses to accept anything until it is demonstrated." As the Chinese put it, "He who refuses belief to honest possibility waters his flower-bed from a sieve."—*John McCabe Moore*.

WHAT MAN

ARE RICKETSIAL BODIES NECESSARY?

MAN'S great friend, the dog, is only rarely affected by rickets, in the consideration of the acute condition. Even street dogs, who receive only the crumbs from man's table, rarely suffer from acute Vitamin D deficiency. Few of this class of animals are ever the wary hunters that can procure enough fresh game or other natural sources of the vitamin. Yet the human being, who considers himself most blessed of all creatures as to diet, suffers from this deficiency to some extent unless his diet is adequately reinforced with some calciferous compound such as Vitamin D.

These facts have rather interesting implications. The first and possibly most interesting of the implications is that the dog must have an endocrine attunement immensely superior to the human's. The dog does not avail itself of any such mechanism as sun-tanning in order to store up vitamin D. It therefore appears that the accumulation of calciferous compounds in the lungs, especially at such times as the atmosphere contains large amounts of ozone, or a wonderful efficiency of the parathyroid glands (found in the neck in close association with the thyroid), either one or both account for the near-immunity of the dog to acute ricketsial condition.

The dog's lung is a marvel of efficiency. It is called upon to do most of the work in connection with perspiration, as the animal has sweat-glands only upon its abdomen. It is therefore not unbelievable that the lung is much more perfectly adapted to life energy flows than is the human organ.

It is likewise to be remarked that the dog seldom suffers from goiter as does the human. The close association of the thyroid and parathyroid glands indicates a definite relationship between the two in connection with calcium phosphorous and iodine metabolism. It is beyond the scope of this article to go into the technicalities in connection with such metabolisms, but papers to be printed later will take up such items in detail. The important fact remains that the systemic balance of the essential minerals is much more efficiently maintained by the canine than by the human. The reasons for this circumstance are several—dietary, hereditary, and psycho-somatic.

Among the dietary reasons for the superiority of the dog must be listed the adaptation to low calcium high phosphate diet (the dog usually depends more upon protein foods than others, but cannot



CAN IMAGINE...

If you will imagine it, perhaps someone will be inspired to do it. This department is for your ideas, no matter how "wild" they may seem; who knows, they may be the spur to some man's thinking and thereby change our destiny! Tell us your thoughts.

usually stand a high milk diet). Dogs usually refuse high-starch or high-sugar diets, which in the case of the human, especially with disaccharides, militate against the endocrine utilization of insulin (it is employed for example in the digestion of white sugar, and its output must be increased by the pancreas in order to bring about through metabolism of any high-sugar diet) which is important not only in the maintenance of systemic tone, but in the condition of such extreme mechanisms as the fighter groups of the blood and perfection of liver function, not to mention its direct impact upon the other endocrine glands?

Hereditary reasons include the tendency to exclude the weaker strains of canine, because of early death of those animals which are not definitely complete in the endocrine sense or not of sufficient strength as regards their chemical mechanisms to survive of themselves. Also the majority of canines are not likely to be as in-bred as are humans, although even among the pure-bred strains the endocrine weaknesses of humans seldom rise recognizably.

Psycho-somatic reasons why the dog is more regular in his endocrine disposition than is the human might be summed up in the statement that it is not usual for the animal to worry. In other words the influencing of the balance of hormones by the adrenally over-weighted sympathetic nervous system has much more to do with the endocrine disorders than the most erudite of endocrinologists would be ready to admit.

A disease in some respects related to rickets (arthritis) has been shown to arise occasionally from critical emotional periods in human lives. Great grief, anger, hate and fear are all potential sources of this awful disturbance of calcium handling by the body. More detailed discussion of



the chemical aspects of arthritis will be forthcoming in the future.

The condition called rickets could be quite completely controlled by our race if A) attention were devoted to the source of most foods (the soil) in respect to trace mineral content, B) foods were not vitiated by the discarding of these same trace minerals in peeling and other wasteful and wanton practices such as prolonged boiling, over-salting, and discarding of vegetable juices, and C) if psychological methodology could find greater favor and more fearless employment. Governmental reinforcement of foods with calciferous compounds appears at best a palliative method. The indications are that man needs to reestablish the kingship of his higher mentality by attaining, if not equilibrium, at least more equanimity. The most logical way to effect this is by the solution of the problem of the lack of the dire essentials, the minerals, and particularly the trace minerals.

There is a very large question of whether a truly healthy parathyroid development might not circumvent the disease of rickets almost entirely without the use of irradiated foods or calciferous materials (as found in fish liver oil etc.). Endocrinology has not been blessed with the governmental reinforcement that has sanctified the atomic bomb. Must mankind worship the Destroyer forever?

The vast evidence that the body requires a certain delicate balance of basic minerals has been

largely swallowed up by the fashionable vitamin trends and the dramatic tendencies of expensive surgery. Truly we are the victims of a vaster marvel-mongering than all the annals of fiction record in all the ages of man. The radio, the newspaper and the moving picture screen might

bring to men some of the knowledge which they have long felt it was their right to have. How long must we wait for the dissemination of light to the masses? They are not all children. They can take it!

—John McCabe Moore

THE STORY OF AN AMAZING BOOK "OAHSPÉ"

SOME time ago we mentioned in these pages that we'd read a very amazing book that would prove of interest to any science fiction fan, as well as prove very startling to any thinking reader in still other ways. Many of our readers got the book, and since then we have received a variety of opinions and expressions of interest that have proven our tip to be correct. Actually, we think, taken from a science fiction viewpoint, *Oahspe* is a book that should not be missed by a real "fan." Since many of our readers have requested that we give them more information about it, we are going to depart from our usual policy, and review a book in our pages.

For the moment, let's take the book as strictly a work of fiction, ignoring any other claims that may be made for it. To begin with, the author is John Ballou Newbrough. He was born on a farm near Springfield, Ohio, June 5, 1828. College education, specializing in medicine and dentistry. He was a big man, and the call of the Australian gold fields drew him to adventure. Returning, he became a dentist in New York, married and had a son and a daughter. He had another daughter by a second wife. He died in Donna Ana, New Mexico, April 23, 1891. He is buried in the Masonic Burial Grounds at Los Cruces, New Mexico.

He wrote *Oahspe* (he says in a letter) in 1881 in one year, by working fifteen minutes each morning about a half-hour before sunrise. He used one of the first typewriters invented, which had its keys arranged in a semi-circle around its front in a single line. He wrote in total darkness!

The book has approximately 700,000 words, and was written in approximately 5,300 minutes—which figures out to 130-plus words per minute. Your editor has seen a typewriter of exactly the same make as the one Newbrough used, and, brother, that's typing! But not impossible. Many authors, by attaining such complete mental detachment as is indicated by Newbrough's statement that he wrote in darkness, can do similar feats of writing today. Your editor has done 90 words per minute on a single manuscript under slightly similar circumstances.

The author claims the book to be a "history" of the Earth (insofar as human habitation is concerned) for 79,000 years; including a history of the same period in an invisible counterpart of the Earth's surface located in the atmosphere. It also includes snatches of related history of the same period on other planets, both visible and

invisible, located in nearby and distant space.

It is this portion of the book that should prove of great interest to the science fiction fan, who is interested in stories of this type. This "history" is detailed in vivid action which sometimes grows quite vociferous. Especially interesting are histories of such characters already familiar to the reader as mythological entities, such as Thor, Apollo, Osiris, etc., who are not dealt with as they are in legend, but as visitors from space who arrive in gigantic space ships, armed with such scientific marvels as have seldom been imagined even in the most ambitious of interplanetary tales. H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" fades to insignificance beside the wars fought by these characters, who are depicted as actual human beings, many of whom actually were born and lived on this planet.

The sinking of the continent of Pan (misnamed Lemuria in popular terminology) by a titanic being from space named Aph is a study of sheer drama.

The visit of Apollo to Earth for the purpose of improving the physical appearance of mankind is another dramatic story, replete with delights for the avid science fiction fan.

Although the story is written with a flair toward a "biblical" type of presentation, which sometimes makes for slow reading, your editor regards the lyrical beauty and literary excellence of many passages to be unsurpassed by even the greatest literature of the Bible, or of Shakespeare, or of any other writer.

To the reader who is interested in more than simple entertainment, i.e., ancient history, mythology, etc., *Oahspe* presents what we might call a "brown study." All of the mythology of the world has been fitted into a composite and chronological whole that is entirely related. One cannot help but feel that here is either the truth about the origin of our modern and classical myths, or Mr. Newbrough has devised a common "denominator" which in itself is a tremendous feat. Your editor himself has decided, after two years of study, that until a better explanation of mythology comes along, he will accept this one as the only plausible working basis, no matter what other connotations the "history" may have.

To the anthropologist, to the student of ancient races and civilizations, to those who delve into the earth and study ancient artifacts and ruins to uncover the mystery of the migrations and origins of peoples, *Oahspe* can and does present a

great deal of food for thought. Scientific discoveries made since 1881 in these fields (which will be well known to those who are interested, and instantly applied to the book) have either proved to be incredibly lucky coincidences, or they would tend to indicate that *Oahspe's* "history" is just that. The inferences to be drawn from such a line of thought are tremendous, and should not be entertained by the casual reader.

TO the scientist, the chemist, physicist and astronomer especially, several sections of *Oahspe* present a challenge—but a challenge that, based on the light of present-day scientific research, will be taken to be no challenge at all. To say that *Oahspe's* science is at variance with accepted concepts would be putting it mildly. Perhaps the interest of the scientist would be in the broadly comprehensive and "logical" way in which the book builds up a scientific concept which, taken as a whole, is quite satisfactory and workable. We have read science fiction stories of other planets where the civilization followed a line of development which differed radically from that taken by humanity on Earth, and it can truly be said that *Oahspe's* "try" in this direction is a masterful one. There is no need to accept it, nor any need to become vociferous in rejecting it. Any scientifically minded reader who would go out of his way to "disprove" the science of *Oahspe* would only be admitting, in his own mind, the weakness of his own fundamental concepts.

One of the most amazing features of *Oahspe* is a series of language charts which purport to carry language development on Earth up from the first written language (Panic) to modern tongues. Although your editor has spent many hours studying these charts for inconsistencies, he has yet to find one. Truly here is one of the mysterious things that make *Oahspe* worthwhile from the same standpoint that makes a crossword puzzle book worthwhile. Many readers would find great fascination in "solving" the puzzles presented by these charts.

If you should happen to have a mystical streak in your makeup, *Oahspe* ought to prove a gold mine of interest to you. The subject of religion, as related to history (*Oahspe's* history) is an in-

triguing one. If you have any ideas about life after death, about "heaven" or "hell," here is a book that has as much claim to greatness as does Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

To the metaphysicist, *Oahspe* presents a challenge. Its concepts along these lines are absorbingly interesting. It provides fuel for mental calisthenics which can lead to unknown heights.

And finally, to the philosopher, here is another "complete" picture of things as they might really be. Or, as might better be said, as close to reality as any concept can be. Reality is that elusive thing which is impossible to reach. We conceive of no ultimate reality, of no ultimate Creator, of no ultimate truth—and in that sense, *Oahspe* will be as eminently acceptable to the philosopher as any philosophy yet devised; and who can say to what degree it is "reality approached"?

Because your editor has been a science fiction fan for 25 years, and has found this book of absorbing interest viewed in the light of his hobby, it would seem "well put" to recommend this book to others like himself.

Oahspe calls itself a "New Bible" but don't let that influence you one way or another. The book is (1) entertaining; (2) thought-provoking; (3) well in line with the interests of *AMAZING STORIES'* content; (4) inextricably linked with the most amazing mystery ever to be presented in any science fiction magazine, the Shaver Mystery. Mr. Shaver himself, while rejecting all of the philosophy and mysticism of the book, recognizes that it is a fine "thought record" of the past, and in his words, is "probably true in an historical sense." But don't take our word for it. If you want to check us, the book can be procured from Kosmon Pub. Co., 2210-A W. 11th St., Los Angeles, Calif., and its cost is \$5.00. If you happen to be a student of the Shaver Mystery, here's just one of the facets of this mystery which may serve to convince you it is no hoax.

Is *Oahspe* the work of John Ballou Newbrough, or is it the work of "spirits" as he claims, or is it, perhaps, the work of Shaver's cave people, and drawn from his "thought records"? Or are all of them talking about the same thing?

Your editor has his own ideas—which have served to entertain him mightily.

SPACE SHIPS LIMITED

No. 2—Power Plants

By JACKSON ROSS

UNTIL the uranium atom was split, for all practical purposes it was physically impossible to escape from the earth. The pull of gravity cannot be overcome except by extremely high speeds or constant accelerations or both. No engine was known which could have carried man or even itself far enough from the earth's gravity pull to be dominated by the gravitation field of any other celestial body.

But note I say "for all practical purposes." The-

oretically it was and is possible to build a rocket ship to reach the moon or any other heavenly body in toward the sun. Technically it would barely have been possible, but when we come to describe this ship the reader will understand the difficulties involved. They are great enough, I think, to warrant the statements made above.

The primary difficulty, of course, is fuel. The calculations have all been worked out by Goddard and others and there is nothing mysterious

or even difficult about them. The basic problem of interspatial flight is but an extension of any rocket flight problem—but greatly magnified.

The first fuel limitation is quantity. If we could carry enough fuel so that we could accelerate constantly, we would not have to worry about starting speed. But with any fuel known (until the atom was split) we could never carry enough. It is simply too heavy. Therefore all serious conceptions of interspatial power plants have been based upon the idea of attaining enough initial velocity to overcome the pull of the earth's gravity. This necessary speed has been known as the "velocity of escape" (from gravity). After having left the earth's atmosphere and most of the pull of gravity (it would diminish as the square of the distance but would never be entirely overcome), [Newton's *Theory*—Ed.] and having attained the velocity of escape, our rocket motors would be shut off. From that point onward our rocket craft would coast freely through space, where there is no friction to stop it.

Now this escape velocity has been calculated quite accurately. It is a speed of about 25,000 miles per hour in the direction of the sun and about 95,000 miles per hour in directions away from the sun. It is more away from the sun than toward the sun because when a rocket ship is moving toward the sun, the sun's gravity attraction is helping to pull it away from earth, while when the ship is moving away from the sun, the gravity attraction of both the earth and the sun combine to work against it.

In toward the sun we might fly to the Moon, Venus, or Mercury. Away from the sun we could head toward Mars, the outer planets, or even goals outside the solar system.

With conventional fuels, it is generally assumed that an efficient rocket can be accelerated to a speed as fast as its own jet velocity before the fuels are consumed. But today we have no rocket capable of jet velocities of 25,000 miles per hour,

to say nothing of 95,000 miles per hour. So the only possible way that we could attain the velocity of escape is by a succession of step rockets. Of course, a rocket can fly faster than the speed of its own jet, but to do so uses more fuel than if it is boosted by successively stepped charges. For the greatest economy, therefore, we have to devise a step rocket.

Now just what is a step rocket? It is simply a multiple rocket. First of all there must be a payload. Then a number of rockets are joined together and fired in series. By continuing the acceleration, each successive firing gives added speed to the part that remains. As each fuel charge is fired and exhausts itself, its burnt-out motor is dropped and the new charge gives even more speed to the smaller part remaining.

With today's fuels, at least six steps would be necessary to attain sufficient speed to escape from the earth. Suppose we were going to start out with a minimum payload. Let's even suppose we might be able to design a one-man ship with a total final weight, including passenger, equipment and car, of only 500 pounds. With jet velocities of 6,000 to 7,000 feet per second, our complete rocket ship, by the time all the steps were built onto it, would weigh about 45,000 tons!

Theoretically, of course, we could build such a craft. But we have, as yet, not made any provision for getting our passenger back to Earth. If we did that, the size of our craft rises to impossible figures.

Now what is the way out? We may be able to find better conventional fuels. If we could double our jet velocity, which is theoretically possible if we used most of the potential energy in an oxygen-gasoline fuel combination, we might be able to cut the size of this ship to as little as 50 tons! If we added an additional fuel load permitting our explorer to get back to earth, it would weigh several times as much but would still be quite feasible.

(Continued on page 174)

GLUTAMIC ACID IN THE AUGMENTATION OF HUMAN EFFICIENCY

WHEAT has been the greatest of the grasses to the white race. For long-unrolling centuries it has furnished most of the occidentals with the staff of life. It has truly been much-abused by refinement and the art of cooking, but it has probably contributed more than any other dietary factor to the vaunted supremacy of the whites. There are specific chemical reasons for this fact.

The kernel of wheat contains an important supplementary substance, which is manufactured to some extent, depending upon general health of the organism and upon the specific health of the liver, within the human body. Although it is present to some extent in practically all proteins, this substance is most effectively obtained by the body from the wheat. It is furnished by soy beans

markedly, but soy beans are deficient in methionine content, the latter being so important that its lack cannot be overlooked as far as general diet is concerned. It is not furnished in significant amounts by rice, so, in the light of further discussion, it will be understood that the brown race, and large parts of the yellow race, have been fighting quite an uphill drag.

When the diet is reinforced with this chemical, called glutamic acid, or when large amounts of it are available from the diet itself (in easily recoverable form), nervous efficiency and its corollary "morale" rise considerably. The rise is so marked that subjective realization of benefit is undeniable. Overuse of the pure substance, however, gives rise to head-aches and nervousness, and a tendency to constipation, the latter particularly

when certain inorganic minerals are over-used in supplement. Proper calcium and protein balance immediately offsets the over-ingestion of glutamic acid, however, if the latter has not been too great. More than five grains per day may increase hemorrhage likelihood, if the cysteine and calcium of the blood (either one or both) are insufficient, and this effect can be dangerous if those blood elements are very low, especially where there has been a previous history of brain hemorrhage, or a prior weakness of capillary walls.

The benefits of sufficient glutamic acid extend much farther, in a purely chemical manner, than those to the central nervous system and the other nerve processes. While the brain and nerve benefits are truly dramatic in cases of epilepsy that are caused by sub-normal liver function, the other tissues also respond to glutamic acid replenishment. Greater health of skin and hair is noticeable, even the rate of hair growth being slightly increased. The same general type of benefit occurs in the muscle tissues, attributable to improved tone in the tissue as well as more effective metabolism of proteins and carbohydrates.

The most remarkable reason for this concatenation of benefits is that glutamic acid tends to restore the balance between the voluntary and autonomic nervous system. Such balance is disturbed by practically every type of negative influence figuring in psychosomatics. In other words, everything from glandular abnormality to non-hygienic habit, and everything from severe emotional experience to over-work and worry has its very direct chemical impact upon the nervous system as a whole. The psychological tendency predominant in all effective people is to take too much into their own hands their bodily dispositions, trying to govern consciously the energetics of peristalsis, the need for rest, and the essential demands of the body for nourishment, without having sufficient time nor regularity to control such phenomena. Finally the autonomic nervous system gets so tired of being pushed around, by not having any attention paid to its findings and its prescriptions, that in certain important respects it almost entirely ceases to fulfill its normal duties. Laxatives, drugs and tonics, and sometimes dire emergency measures are substituted for proper habit and considerations.

Until comparatively recently science has paid little attention to any of the life-essential protein constituents (amino acids) except those which it had classed as "essential" because it appeared that the body could not manufacture them. The growing realization that substances such as glutamic acid, which does not classify as an essential amino acid in this sense, may be deficient in the animal and human bodies because of dysfunction of the organs, or serious dietary insufficiencies (or varying combinations of both), makes it apparent that these substances deserve sharp scrutiny. Even when basic protein substance is included in large amount in the diet, drugs or beverages, or both, may be militate against protein digestion (cleav-

age) and assimilation, that the body may be denied its needs. Alcohol, coffee and alkaloids are the chief offenders in this regard.

THE general acclimatization of the white man to richer, if softer, dietary items makes his group much more subject to the effects of starvation. The Japanese, accustomed to centuries of diet deficient, or very nearly so, in important basic substance, has indubitably created a group which is better able to subsist on seriously questionable diet, although the general tendencies of the Nippon race to be neurotic, myopic (short-sighted) and of diminutive stature demonstrate well the price they have paid for subsisting on such diet. The white captives in the Japanese prison camps in the Philippines, expected to flourish on the sort of diet that kills even Chinese coolies long before their time, are ample demonstration of what difference lies between the brown race and the white in the way of fundamental dietary requirements. Although the yellow race does not furnish the same type of compact, definitive example as do the Japanese, the lower class groups of yellow people, as found in metropolitan areas, show the same dietary hardihood as the Japanese soldier.

The chief function of glutamic acid is that of a carrier agent in the tissue-oxidation of carbohydrates. Its raising of energy level is identified with its important reactions in such oxidation. The carrier mechanism of the human body is probably the most abused *modus operandi* in the chemique, but since that is part of another vaster story, the point will be passed over, with the single addition of the fact that this particular carrier agent is effective in the optically dextro-rotatory form, the laevo-rotatory isomer being unnatural, and to a degree poisonous, to the higher animals and man.

The structures of most proteins in the animal body require this amino acid in order to be complete. It is therefore but a step to the realization of the reason for the improvement in skin and hair health and its influence upon most of the structures in the body. The fact that it is a constituent of insulin makes it obvious that a dire deficiency in this simple compound may become one of far more serious implications (diabetes) if there has been liver damage which incapacitates the manufacturing process. In fact it is indicated by this fact that the supplementing of the diet of some considerable number of diabetics with glutamic acid may correct (in a more reasonable and far safer manner) the disease for which insulin is now used. As the liver ages, its ability to produce those amino acids not usually called essential decreases markedly, and general loss of tone of the body tissues further reduces the supply of these body elements (by impairing appetite as well as by impairing digestive and assimilative processes) so that the blood balance of certain of them at last falls to the point where the pancreas can no longer obtain all the building blocks of insulin. When even one of the building blocks is left out of the pancreatic hormone, it is not the hormone at all,

but a totally different substance which may do more harm than good, perhaps even undermining the health of the diabetic while he employs insulin. It is definite that a diabetic under the most careful management of insulin medication and blood sugar level has neither the health nor the life expectancy of a normal person.

It is thus demonstrable, both by consideration of the facts and by experiment; that this simple (and harmless on circumpect use) compound is one of the very important substances capable of functioning to broaden the horizons of man.

Its remarkable effects upon the central nervous system result from its improvement of cellular energy levels. It improves memory and renders thought processes simpler. It eases nervous tension, and in some cases promotes a remarkable calmness. By its central nervous system effects it promotes the coordination of the entire organism, reducing simultaneously the synaptic resistance of both the autonomic and the voluntary nerve processes. Its effects upon the body are in no way unnatural or truly stimulating, morale and energy levels returning to their ordinary stages when dietary reinforcement is withdrawn.

Continuous indiscreet over-employment of the substance has some effect upon the eyeballs similar to xerophthalmia. This fact alone should be powerful enough to dissuade anyone from the

over-ingestion of the substance. Such effect disappears with discontinuation of the compound.

The total effect of dietary reinforcement of glutamic acid upon an entire people would be difficult to estimate. What influence it might exert upon criminal minds, to the increase in shrewdness of criminality, would be immediately overborne by its normalizing effects upon the mentalities in danger of launching themselves into criminal endeavors on account of low morale, not to mention the tremendous reduction in insanity which would be realized shortly.

It is to be realized that this substance is only one of many whose varying degrees of deficiencies (or combinations of deficiencies) must be considered in any comprehensive rationale of the human organism. It is definitely not a cure-all, but it is certainly a powerful tool, and when used with legitimacy and medical common sense, it should work to the vast betterment of society.

—John McCabe Moore

P.S. As an afterthought, although it should hardly be necessary to point out the connection, it is quite obvious that glutamic acid plays a large role in the relationship of the liver to carbohydrate metabolism, which has been (and still is) regarded as one of the more sublime of the clinical mysteries.

AMAZING Facts

By VINCENT H. GADDIS

TREASURE OF TANTALUS

OFF the coast of Nova Scotia, washed by the waters of Mahoni Bay, lies Oak Island, site of a tremendous treasure estimated to be of great value. The exact location of this great wealth is known. Repeated attempts have been made to obtain the gold as salvage company experts matched wits with college professors. But two centuries ago a group of pirates devised a tunnel system of protection that has baffled the best engineers of modern times.

The story of Oak Island is a dark and almost incredible mystery. No one knows who placed the treasure there, but a small army of workers must have been employed in constructing the two-hundred-foot shaft and the tunnel to the sea. Apparently no attempt was ever made by members of the original group to reclaim the wealth. The location has been known for a century and

a half, but the enemy of successive treasure hunters has not been murder or mutiny, but water.

Today this golden link with the violent days of the Spanish Main lies beyond our grasp because of an engineering problem. Water from the sea floods all shafts in the area, but the water in the shafts does not return to the sea. Apparently there is a concealed shut-off valve which acts to hold the water back from the sea. If the location of this valve can be determined, Oak Island will surrender its secret.

The long saga of failure and frustration began in 1795 when three young men came to the island on a picnic. While wandering about they came to a clearing which overlooked a small cove at the extreme end of the bay. In the center of this clearing the men noticed a large oak tree from which a limb had been sawed, while the trunk

exhibited marks indicating that the tree had served as a derrick for a block and tackle.

Puzzled, the men looked around and noticed a hollow in the soil resembling an old filled-in well. Nearby was a moss-covered stone bearing a rusty ring-bolt and an old boatswain's whistle. Further search in the surrounding turf was rewarded by the discovery of a coin dated 1713.

Treasure! The men started digging. They soon found that the hollow was the top of a circular shaft. The marks of pick and spade were still visible. Soft soil allowed them to make rapid progress. Suddenly, at ten feet, they struck something solid. It was a heavy floor of oak planks. With increasing excitement they removed the planking, only to find more soil beneath. But the shaft continued on, deep into the earth.

At twenty feet another level of wooden planking was found and removed. More dirt. The shaft continued. Finally, at thirty feet, the tired men reached a layer of flooring so solid and heavy that they failed to move it. They abandoned their work and returned to their homes on the mainland.

The three men kept their secret, but they did not forget. Six years later, in 1801, they told a Dr. Lynds, of Truro, Nova Scotia, about their discovery, and an excavating company was formed. Again the soil of Oak Island was attacked, and from the thirty-foot level the depth of the shaft was increased to ninety-five feet.

As they labored deeper into the earth, the workmen became more and more astonished. At every ten feet some form of obstruction was found. The barriers of wooden planking changed to layers of coconut matting and then yellow putty. Finally, at ninety feet, a stone bearing a mysterious inscription was revealed. Shortly afterward the stone was lost and has never been found since. No copy of the writing was ever made.

Having penetrated to ninety-five feet where another layer of planking formed a barrier, the diggers decided to call it a day. Darkness was rapidly approaching, and they were tired. But while they slept the enemy seeped in from the depths below, and they awakened the next morning to find seventy feet of water in the shaft.

The workman decided to dig another shaft, but the following night it, too, was flooded. Again they tried—and failed. The struggle was hopeless. It was impossible to reach the treasure with one day's work, and the water always came in the night. Baffled, disappointed, they left the island never to return, and for almost a century Oak Island lay undisturbed with its wealth locked in its water-clad heart.

THEN, in 1896, treasure hunters came again. They arrived with power-driven hores and with the idea of sinking several shafts simul-

taneously in order to drain the water from the original pit where the treasure likely lay. Once, as the work progressed, they struck soft metal. The metal failed to cling to the bore bits, but they were certain it was gold. However, their drainage system failed. Water flowed from a limitless source into all their shafts. Oak Island had won again.

From New York, in 1910, came the Bath Wrecking and Salvage Association. Their engineers surveyed the scene, and their workmen started drilling. Down, deeper and deeper, into the original shaft the drills made their way, passing through successive obstructions until they struck what apparently was a solid mass of concrete. But the hits conquered the cement and finally reached the astonishing depth of one hundred and seventy feet. Still the shaft continued! But then the water came, rising relentless and unconquerable, faster than the pumps could handle it, and the struggle was given up.

Three years later Prof. Welling, of the University of Wisconsin, arrived at the site. He made a long and careful scientific study of the problem. The original builders, he discovered, had bored a tunnel from the nearby cove on the shore to the pit, and he proved that there was a connection between the shaft and the sea.

Continuing his investigation, Prof. Welling dissolved a red dye in the water of the original shaft, but this water remained in the shaft and did not pass out to sea through the tunnel. Puzzled, he decided that somewhere in the tunnel there was a shut-off valve which caused the water to remain in the pit. Quite likely a secret method of releasing this valve had been devised by the group which concealed the treasure, and this action would allow the water to drain out of the pit and out to sea.

The nature of this valve, how it works, and where it is located, if it exists, are still mysteries. On the other hand, it has been suggested that one or more subterranean wells may have become active below and around the treasure cache between the time it was placed there and first penetrated by diggers.

Another suggested that has been made by students of the problem is that the original valve device, located at the mouth of the tunnel where it enters the sea, has been destroyed by storms or heavy sea action.

One thing is certain: of all the treasure stories the mystery of Oak Island best illustrates the agony of Tantalus. And it seems certain that the wealth here concealed must be of fabulous value considering the astonishing efforts that were made to hide and protect it. Someday we shall know for the ingenuity of engineering skill will yet solve the puzzle created two centuries ago off Nova Scotia.

PROOF ON THE SHAVER MYSTERY—COMING!

Vignettes OF FAMOUS SCIENTISTS

By ALEXANDER BLADE

Fabre

Instinct or reason? This scientist's most important contribution to knowledge lies in this argument

THE French entomologist, Jean Henri Fabre, was born at St. Leons in Aveyron on December 21, 1823. He was the son of a small land owner with a family so large and an income so meager from his little patch of earth, that it became necessary at a very early age to send him to his grandparents in the neighboring village of Malaval where, by tending the geese and ducks he could at least earn his keep.

When Fabre was seven years old conditions at home improved slightly and he was brought back and sent to the local primary school. In 1833 the family left their little farm and moved to the town of Rodez, where his father opened a cafe and the boy was able to attend school, where he made good progress. By this time he was so interested in the study of natural history that the Latin he was forced unwillingly to study became a fascinating task as soon as he had advanced far enough to encounter the "Bucolics" of Virgil.

Four years later the family moved again, to Toulouse, and in the following year to Montpellier. Fabre was now a sturdy lad of fifteen, and felt under obligations to leave his home and earn his living wherever he could find employment. Being a friendly boy he made friends everywhere, and the outdoor life of a laborer brought him continually in contact with the nature he loved. Working conscientiously at every employment he secured, living simply, and saving his surplus earnings; when in his wanderings he reached the city of Avignon, and learned that there was to be held an examination for a bursary at its normal school, he boldly entered the race and easily won it. This good fortune enabled him to abandon manual labor and take the full course that the institution provided. When he passed his final examinations in 1843 with credit and before he had attained his majority, he was offered the position of teacher at the primary school connected with the college in the town of Carpentras.

There he taught with such success, while at the same time grasping every opportunity to increase his own stock of knowledge, that he was

offered the professorship of physics, mathematics and chemistry at the Lyceum at Ajaccio, on the island of Sardinia. While serving here he had the good fortune to meet the botanist, Moquin-Tandon, and to be able to assist him in his work of collection in the wonderful flora of that island. Between them a strong and lasting friendship developed. Meanwhile he had discovered that his life-work was to be the study of the life-history, habits and instincts of insects.

In 1852, in consequence of an attack of the malarial fever prevalent on the island in certain seasons of the year, Fabre decided to return to France, and through the aid of Moquin-Tandon was appointed to the professorship in physics and chemistry at the Avignon lyceum where formerly he had been a student. There, in a region thronging with insect and bird life he passed several comparatively happy years, devoting his leisure hours to investigations in natural history and chemistry.

BY THIS time he had become so well known among scientists by his frequent small publications and contributions to current periodicals that he was elected a member of the Legion of Honor. In 1858 he won his degree as licentiate in natural history, and a little later the coveted doctor's degree, which he hoped would open to him a call to a university position. This did not come through, because, as he learned afterwards through a friend, of his limited means, he began the investigation of the coloring matter alizarin, with the intent of undertaking the business of dyeing as a means of making money. But just as he was getting well started the era of synthetic dyes began, with which he was unable to contend. Thus at last Fabre was compelled to take to his writing seriously as a means of support. He had already published a few school text books, but they added little to his income.

In 1870 he moved to a house in the suburbs of Orange where, surrounded by his devoted family, and far away from the world of strife, he spent

nine happy years studying and describing the abundant insect life of the region, and easily finding a market for his work at fair remuneration. Here he lived an extremely secluded life, absorbed in his study. He took no account of books, and all his work was based on direct observation. Although the ways of all insects interested him, his attention was given chiefly to the hymenoptera, coleoptera, orthoptera, as well as to spiders. Of the first, the wasps, with their skill in stinging their prey in the region of the nervous ganglia so as to paralyze it and preserve it living as food for their young, seemed to Fabre to show an intelligence irreconcilable with the theory of fixed habits. Other researches led him to oppose the theory of evolution. These monographs were written in a style at once so simple, and yet so delightful, as to win for him a large circle of readers not only in France but throughout Europe and in America. Before he could fairly appreciate the fact he had become one of the most noted of naturalists.

AFTER the death of his eldest son Jules in 1879—which Fabre took very hard—he moved to a still more secluded residence near the little village of Serignan, where he spent the balance of his long life. There he planned and executed his great ten-volume work which made his name famous. It was published under the title of "Souvenirs Entomologiques." In it is detailed his incomparable observations, his deductions, concerning the relation between the animal and the human mind, and between entomology and agri-

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The most important strictly scientific result that was reached by his life studies was undoubtedly the light that he threw upon the nature of the faculty of instinct, as contrasted with that human one called reason. In his own words he regarded the former as proving, in the case of each individual studied "perfect wisdom, comparable with and even superior to human wisdom, within the customary conditions of their lives; and incredible stupidity outside of them." This is perhaps the most correct definition of the character and nature of instinct as a phenomenon that has been put into words.

The End

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A NUMBER of months ago, in the annals of A. S. (Amazing Science, pardon the pun) a writer brought up the subject of the colon as a possible chief causative factor in disease processes and death. It was probably viewed askance by a great many readers, but there is a great deal of evidence to bolster the culpability of that body area in connection with many diseases.

As a first example let us view the condition which might be misnamed "the disease of America," namely hypertension, or high blood pressure. In more than ninety per cent of the cases of abnormally high blood pressure, the failure of the intestinal elimination to proceed normally is remarked. This means that toxins reabsorbed into the blood and lymph are militating against the ability of those fluid tissues to maintain themselves as completely effective nutritive agencies (the colon is not an area intended for chemical absorption, it is true, but the giving of nutritive substance by that route is often routine when food cannot be taken by mouth, e.g. whole eggs). It means also that a certain percentage of poisonous materials must sooner or later be accepted by tissues other than the blood and lymph. Naturally the remedying of the underlying condition is not a simple

affair because it may be dependent upon a great many different factors or upon one of many.

The fever mechanism of the body, with which it meets any major invasion by foreign micro-organisms, is also tremendously influenced by the colon. Repeated enemata of temperature above that of the blood, will invariably reduce body temperature to nearer normal. This sounds very paradoxical, by reason of the fact that raising the temperature of any portion of the body would be expected to cause a minor increase in the general temperature. However, when this mechanism is viewed from the toxin stance, the result becomes entirely rational. The truth is that when the alien poisons of the germ causing an infection are added to the poisons to which the body is already somewhat acclimated by habit (those absorbed in the colon), the body elevates its temperature in an endeavor to consume the poison load by fire. If the poisons from the colon are removed so that their further absorption is rendered impossible, the amount of extra heat energy required in burning the micro-organisms' alien toxins is readily furnished by a temperature nearer normal thus serving the thyroid and total body energy. The bodily return to normal temperature depends from this

point on the organism's ability to destroy the invaders and their poisons by the fever method. Insidious diseases which either fail to cause fever at all or which do not cause it until too late for effective body response to be possible, are usually much more to be feared than the diseases which cause fever at their onset and are marked by fever throughout their entire courses.

It is laughing-stock in many hospital circles that depressed patients often request repeated cathartics, but that there is a very solid basis for the desires of some patients for improved elimination is not to be denied. Hypersensitive individuals almost invariably blame stasis, when it is present, for circumstances ranging all the way from depressed or nervous states to acute infections. There are a good many reasons to believe that much so-called "nervous temperament" results from stasis. For example, it may one day be demonstrated unequivocally that delayed elimination is often responsible for damage to the parathyroid glands, which by failure to maintain the blood calcium at sufficient concentration, interferes with the calmness necessary to proper rest and tissue nutrition. The theory that the parathyroids actually do destroy certain foreign toxins, which would be positive evidence of the above cycle if it were proved correct, leads directly to the possibility of thus throwing the entire system out of balance. In connection with this it is worth remarking that children whose colons fail to function regularly are subject to insomnia and walking and talking during sleep much more than completely normal children.

Heart action, it is now realized, is influenced by a great many substances, both medicinal and otherwise. If therefore the toxins from the colon do affect the level of blood calcium directly, the action of the pump is directly influenced by the consequent alteration of calcium, potassium-sodium ratios. Many substances foreign to the animal body have been employed as heart stimulants, and even as rat poison, (red squill, a relative to the medicinal digitalis). Little, if any, work has ever been done experimentally with the organic poisons manufactured in the colon, although it is well-known that germs putrefying food outside the body may produce fatal poisoning. The ptomaines, often very poisonous, may be formed in some degree in the colon. Any alkaloid or any ptomaine manufactured by bacteria normally

found in the colon, or *not* normally found there, may well be open to question. Alkaloids embrace the deadly narcotics, such as cocaine, et al, not to mention substances like strychnine. It is not much of a stretch of the imagination, therefore, to realize that poisons capable of functioning against the action of separate organs like the heart may well derive from the colon.

A research man has brought out the fact that it is not only possible to rear animals who are bacteria-free, but that they are far more healthy as successive generations are bred than ordinary animals. From his work it appears that (regardless of the medical opinionation that certain bacteria are "friendly" when found in the colon) the friendship is only a matter of the lesser of a multiplicity of evils. In the relationship of the colon bacillus, long considered to be a "friend" worth harboring, we find the bacillus of typhoid and typhus. Nor are these great enemies of man very distant relatives of the colon bacillus.

A number of years ago a New York physician came out very enthusiastically championing the utilization of the lactobacillus acidophilus (sour-milk germ) instead of the colon bacillus, claiming that the substitute germ is practically capable of supplying the body with its requirements of the vitamin B complex. Strangely enough, this like many another medical achievement has not received any publicity either among the professionals or the laymen. Of course the Bulgarian yogurt, which is essentially a continuous culture of a similar germ, is still employed by the Bulgarians and a few others in the maintenance of health. The longevity and hardihood of the Bulgarians who follow the milk-transplantation of yogurt throughout their lives, are very outstanding characteristics. They seldom grey early, their physical strength is usually great, they are dynamic and usually practical and successful people.


These few statements should constitute enough argument to the general lay mind that there are reasons to question the condition of the colon in any disease. A druggist friend of the writer's once made the sarcastic rejoinder to a nonsensical query, "You surely don't have to ask your doctor whether you need castor oil!" Although this answer seemed a bit extreme, both to the customer addressed and to the writer, it was certainly a burlesque of some peoples' knowledge of rudimentary hygienics.

J. M. Moore

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The SHAVER MYSTERY—EXPOUNDED!



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(Continued from page 168)

was visited, and wrote us a letter of denial, which we published, and now, finally, Mr. Greene comes forth with his confession. We DO check up on all leads. We go to an enormous amount of trouble to check them. Unfortunately there are VGs to make "fools" out of us, and waste our time. We accept this hardship, and so do our readers who are as sincere as we about the Shaver Mystery. Let this be proof that we are sincere. IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO GET PROOF, WE'LL GET IT.

Mr. Greene, did your visions of horror float across your eyes when you did your best to make our readers believe in the Shaver Mystery, with your rocket-ship hoax? Did your conscience bother you when you considered people slaying one another because they might be dero? Or when you pictured the president sending the army into the caves? May we lay any "slayings" at YOUR door, Mr. Greene? After all, YOU ARE THE ONE WHO IS A HOAXER, NOT US.

Now to answer your questions:

1. Mr. Shaver lives at Lily Lake, Illinois. You, or anyone else, may prove he exists by hiring an investigator to ascertain the fact.

2. He is sure. Are you?

3. We fail to find this information anywhere in the laws of physics. Aren't you misinformed?

4. There are ventilators.

5. Food is both grown there and shipped in from the surface. In addition they eat each other.

6. The dero, viewing the sun over their rays, which augment anything coming over them terrifically, make the mistake of allowing surface sunlight to come down to them, thus getting a concentrated effect; also, their machines, exposed to this, accumulate detriment and still further augment it (for instance, the ben rays, instead of being beneficial, are made detrimental, and the deros spend much time bathing in the rays).

7. Shaver has already explained, many times, why the Atlans built cities in caves. If you built one beside a tropic river, you'd be in danger of floods, earthquakes, and it would be very hot. Take your choice. Do you know an easier way to make sun proof cities; to the extent of excluding all daylight and all radioactives in air, soil, water, food?

8. Where did the Atlans get space ships? They aren't invented YET! Are we the only inventors in the universe?

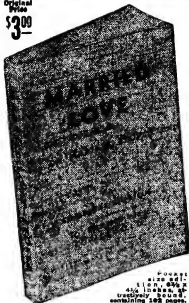
9. You are misinformed. There are countless mentions. A visit to your library would convince you of that.

10. YOUR letter was a hoax, so was Rowland's. There are more hoaxes. We are very patient with such as you. You are few in number. Most people have more strength of character. As to where the letters are, your editor has them in a steel file, where anyone could read them. None

(Continued on page 172)

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The marital rights of the husband.

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The intimate physical contacts of love in marriage.

Surest way to prepare wife for coitus.

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(Continued from page 170)

of them were written by our staff. Why do you ask? Mr. Graham's hydrodynamics? We have his complete manuscript. Are you mentally equipped to evaluate it? Photos? Yes, we have some. One of a ray, coming through Mr. Shaver's bed, another of a weird shadow on a landscape, another showing a strange shape in a dark room. None of them prove anything. Two come from readers, who could have faked them. The other we cannot explain. We make no attempt to explain. But we wonder about it.

There you are, Mr. Greene. Answers you can file away with your imaginary space ship. But the rocket fragment that landed on an Oregon campus was NOT imaginary. Strange that your hoax should have so much truth in it! Actually, we thank you for your prank, as it did stir up much interest, and was very helpful. And now it has helped to prove that we are sincere, and that we can take even such dero activities as yours with no hard feelings. Good luck.—Ed.

TOO BAD IT DISAPPEARED!

Sirs:

While coming home on the bus a few weeks ago, I got an idea for an FM receiver. Although I thought there must be something wrong with the idea, because it only took two tubes and used no inductions, I decided to build it as soon as I got home. I used one type 1S4 and one type 1S5 tube, with a flashlight battery and a 45 volt Ever-ready Minimax. The tuning was by a potentiometer. There was only one trouble with the thing—it worked. It not only tuned nearby station WMTT, but WQXQ, New York. The output went into the phone input on my radio amplifier. I was delighted, but I had other things to do, so I put off making a diagram for an a-c-operated unit and list of parts. I did continue to listen to it as long as FM came in—about two more hours—until midnight. In the morning, I made the mistake of switching the thing on. (I think I might still have it if I hadn't). It cut in on a two-way conversation of Shaver double-talk! The voices had the clear, flat tone of airline control-towers, or hospital pagers, but they just didn't make sense, and I almost switched it off when one of them said clearly "dero mech" right in the middle of a sentence. I listened some more, and heard more Shaver words. Examples: stim, stim-ray, ray-mech. Also Chicago and Denver. Although I can say for sure that the language in general was not English, French, German or Russian, that's all.

Like a stupid idiot, I shoved the thing in a drawer, dashed over to the potmainie kitchen for breakfast, and off to the lab. When I got back, the tuner was gone, and I had completely forgotten the vital details.

For heaven's sake, don't stick this in your magazine! I hope, in time, to get a Ph.D. in physics and be a sober, down-to-earth scientist. The electronics boys would laugh me into a nerv-

ous wreck if this got out. I do think the Shaver crowd may have something, although I'd want to see some of his gadgets built and work, or something like that, and I'd rather have it all be just a good gag.

The reason I am writing you is a simple and completely selfish thing. I want that circuit. If any of the other people who write in send you a diagram of a circuit with a pentode input and a diode-pentode output, with one potentiometer (I can't even remember the resistance) as the only control, except for, probably, a switch, I want a copy. I promise I'll turn it off when these joes start talking their jabber immediately. I'll forget anything I hear! Just ask any electronics man how far he'd go about getting FM from here, perfectly, for over two hours, and you'll know what I mean.

Believe me, I am not looking for publicity, and this is not a hoax. I love music, and I'm hoping this thing will pop up elsewhere, so that I can listen to FM cheaply. I'm a down-to-earth guy and the last thing I want is to start hearing spooks.

Nothing else was stolen with the tuner, although it was in a drawer with some fairly valuable stuff.

(address deleted)

Too bad. Well, we haven't any diagram such as you mention, but we'll hope, as you do, that there is one, and we publish your letter against your wishes, so that maybe some reader will fulfill our hope! We held out your name and address, and even the mention in your letter of your town, so as to keep you from being embarrassed, as you request. However, for the information of our readers, your gadget received FM from many hundreds of miles away. If you should ever get that idea again, for Pete's sake, patent it, and send us a diagram. We WANT to listen in on "those joes."—Ed.

MORE STRANGE THINGS!

Sirs:

This Shaver Mystery has caused my grey matter to perform a few memory tricks. I recall reading an article in "Popular Mechanics Magazine" dated in the late 20s or early 30s concerning a hill in Latin America which was completely surrounded by an invisible wall of force. Archaeologists in that area tried unsuccessfully to penetrate it or find its maximum altitude.

I pause here to chuckle at those people who make claims without proof. If my statement can be verified (I don't imagine it should prove too difficult) then Shaver should have one more instance to prove his statements. Maybe it ties in? I make no claims outside my ability to prove my point. I know the information is there!

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Can anybody dig this info up?—Ed.

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SPACE SHIPS LIMITED

No. 2—Power Plants

By JACKSON ROSS

(Continued from page 160)

But please note that we do not have any such rocket motors at the present time. We do not have any metals capable of withstanding such heat out of which to build the rocket motors. Even if we did, this seems to be the absolute limit using any conventional fuels known. But with such efficient motors, interspatial travel does become barely possible.

Scientists have observed a special kind of hydrogen, called "monatomic hydrogen" which might be an ideal rocket fuel. So far its use is only theoretical, however. We don't even know how to manufacture it. Hydrogen atoms ordinarily cling together in pairs. Monatomic hydrogen is formed when these pairs are separated by electricity. When the pairs again unite, they give off enormous amounts of heat. If hydrogen could be liquefied in its monatomic state and then he burned in a rocket motor, an enormous amount of power would result—enough to make space flight quite practical if motors were developed in which the fuel could be used.

But let me repeat that these calculations are only theoretical. We don't know whether we could produce it, or having produced it whether we could liquefy it, or having liquefied it whether we could control it. If we could, it is so powerful that we would need no step rockets to fly in toward the sun at least, and the weight of a solar space craft might begin to approach that of a conventional airplane.

Now what about atomic power? We have enormous energies in the atom. Though we have only split a few fissionable materials and have not begun to use its whole energy, it has given us the power to take a space ship out beyond the stars.

But who wants to sit on an atomic pile? Exposure to atomic rays for a fraction of a second means death. The walls of an atomic rocket motor, therefore, would be many feet thick. Perhaps by the time our craft were built it would weigh so much that the amount of fissionable materials contained in it would not have sufficient power to fly us into space. I don't think so, myself. I believe that some day we could build an atomic rocket motor capable of flying to the planets—or beyond. But there is a great objection to such power which I shall discuss a little later.

First of all we must face the fact that today we have no idea how such a machine could be built. We only know how to make the atom work for us in two ways—by explosion and by heating water which may be used to power heavy steam plants. We cannot control it. We have no means

of using it to power rockets at present nor are we likely to have in the near future.

But here is my big reason for feeling that we cannot use such motors even if we could develop them, and even if they could be manipulated in absolute safety by rocket engineers and pilots. That big reason is the by-products of fissioning—the poisons, the gases, the deadly rays.

As this is written, only five atomic bombs have ever been fired in the earth's history. But already there is a measurable increase in radioactivity in the atmosphere. It has fogged film. No one safely can be within miles of an atomic explosion. After the explosion, the radioactive elements are dispersed over the globe.

Some one has said that a few hundred atomic bombs might so fill the atmosphere with radioactivity that human life on earth would be impossible. What does it matter if it is a few thousand? Or even a few hundreds of thousand? The fact is that any considerable number of atomic power plants, relying on fission for their energy, would be extremely dangerous to any one in the vicinity.

The blast of the rocket motors would pollute hundreds of cubic miles of air. The radioactive rays would be dangerous to the horizon. The net result of atom rocket motors in increasing radioactivity would be similar to the net result of atomic bomb explosions. Somebody is bound to get hurt. Enough such activity and everyone is likely to get hurt. Life on earth might come to be impossible. But long before that, radiation would so have affected the genes of human seed that we would be breeding only a race of monsters.

There may be a solution even to this. In some future age, the moon might become an outpost of earth for the sole purpose of basing atomic-powered space ships. The moon would have to be reached first by some non-radiating rocket fuels. The ships from earth to the moon would have to land on specially-built bases, housed in specially-sheathed underground storage vaults. All repair would have to be done in carefully-protected underground repair bases.

The surface of the moon itself would be boiling with radioactivity from the rocket motors. Only the underground hangars, hotels and operations of the space ships would be free from the lethal radiation. Operations under such conditions would be inordinately difficult. All oxygen would have to be flown from earth or manufactured on the moon. So would construction materials, food, tools, everything needed by such an undertaking.

Until, in some advanced age, we could set up such an elaborate base, atomic-powered space craft seem to be too dangerous for use. Before we ever have them, we must first build a motor capable of flying 25,000 miles an hour. We have to find the fuels to power it. We have to build a ship and send it to the moon. We have to send it with enough fuel to get it back to earth. We are a long way from any of these accomplishments.

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THE MOON EFFECTS



By

A. MORRIS



SCIENTISTS are beginning to moderate their scorn of the idea that the moon may exert a considerable influence upon many phenomena with which they are familiar. Their change of attitude arises because of many different facts.

During the action in the South Pacific it was a fortunate thing that medical officers were able to discount the psychotic influence of the moon by virtue of the fact that Japanese planerads were almost invariably made on moonlight nights. It is a fortunate thing, however, only in the sense that it enabled those officers to maintain a stand-pat attitude against the fact that the moon could be a potent influence upon the central nervous system. Outside of hopeful denials made by the army doctors there is no evidence against this centuries-old opinion of many people. These men merely hoped that the more or less continuous association of raids and moonlight brought about a conditioned reflex which was activated by moonlight alone in the absence of Jap planes. But it is a certainty that these would-be scientists have never studied the subjective reactions of mental patients. If they had they would not take the polarized reflections of the moon so lightly.

At one time the writer had a friend who was an attendant (male nurse, that is) at a sanitarium where mental patients were treated exclusively. This attendant was a remarkable student of human nature as well as a psychologist of considerable understanding. He made, among others, the following observations about the patients with respect to the lunar cycle. A certain woman, definitely of the hysterical sort, complained upon all occasions of searing pains about the whole eyesocket on either side. The attendant noted that whenever the moon was aloft, this woman's hysterical complaints became almost uncontrollable, to the extent that it was often necessary to place her in restraint (polite name for strait-jacket) to protect her from self-damage. He also noted that at no time when the moon had set was her condition such as to necessitate restraint. In fact, at such times she deplored her own complaints and expressed hope that the pain could somehow be permanently alleviated, although even then she insisted that she was in continuous torture. The friend's idea was that glandular changes or malnutrition, or generally unsettled chemical conditions in the body, or some combination of these causes had so sensitized the nerves in the eye region that even the effects of the moonlight itself, not to mention the tidal and other effects exerted by that body, became apparent to her in sensations arising in the damaged nerve tissues. A one-time lawyer (supposed to have been a very brilliant one) was a victim of manic depressions, wherein the patient has alternating periods of uncontrollable

ble energy and very marked lack of energy. This man ordinarily left the other patients strictly alone, preferring to mumble to himself, and seldom saying anything intelligible at all. About every twenty days, however, this patient would become extraordinarily excitable, so that neither attendants nor patients dared pay any attention to him without his flying into a dangerous rage. Oddly enough, these manic occasions were *always* and *only* manifest when the moon was up. (Perhaps many of our psychiatrists are under the impression that the moon comes up only at night. Or perhaps they have their noses so hard upon the grindstone that they do not have time to look up to check on whether it still rises and sets. Or perhaps the whole business is just too much trouble—a complicating factor, so to speak, which might endanger some of the fashionable psychiatric theories.) Another case was one of so-called fixation, a woman whose mind had been deranged, possibly by a terrible emotional experience. This woman never spoke but four words, including the first name of a man, the interjection oh!, my, and God. Only in the passage of the moon across the sky did she ever speak.

The evidence, however, does not cease with these facts. Not only did the attendant notice increased irritability in many patients while the moon was in the sky, but he became interested in discovering whether substantially "normal" people were affected. Over a period of four or five years he claimed to have found that about one-third of the people he knew complained bitterly of sleeplessness occasionally, *most* particularly failing to rest on moonlit nights. In addition to this, he said that only one or two of the complainers connected their disturbance with the moon.

Because there is something a bit morbid about moonlight and loneliness, it might be advanced, in true Freudian fashion, that psychiatrists fear the possibility that the moon may exert some effect upon their own minds, and so they deny it.

BECAUSE banana-growers are not inclined to be as peculiar as they are practical, they do not discount the effects of the moon so readily. It is claimed that these men can definitely distinguish between bananas maturing in different phases of the lunar cycle by the size of the fruit and its curvature. From such evidence, the influencing of form and size through the chemical mechanisms of the plant seems sort of necessary. In the light of such implications, not to mention the other aspects of moon-influence, the grievous and cynical debunkers of the ages-long experiences of the common, practical dirt-farmer owe the latter a big string of apologies.

What truly great chemical engineer would deny moonlight (or changes in gravitational flux arising from the moon's "attraction") and effect upon chemical change unless he had first conclusively demonstrated that such an effect were impossible? Yet the small-minded debunker, with his effete blindness, beats his dishpan like a boy Hitler, and

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screams imprecations at those who only believe in their methods because they work.

When variations in many organic chemical processes (some at best yield paltry amounts of end-product), so important to the attainment of environmental control, appear, at unexpected times with conditions apparently ideal, the myriad, ever-present forces of nature shuttle back and forth unverified as to their aiding or interfering influences.

The moon draws up the tides of the sea. Many do not realize that it also draws up tides in the land surfaces of the earth. All that man is and has, in the physical world, is composed of solids, liquids and gases. There is indubitably atmospheric tide as well as the other two types. What physiological chemist finds himself in the position to assert that the cycles of the human body are totally unaffected by the moon's reflections or by its tidal effects? Would a logical man agree that the greater fluidity of the blood would result in a greater tendency for it to reply to the call of the moon than for solid tissue to respond—in the same manner as the greater fluidity of the oceans makes their tides much more appreciable than those of the land areas? If so, would that man also agree that the super-sensitive nerve-cells of man might have their body-fluids affected in like manner?

A fellow on the street the other day said, "What time is it?" His friend answered that it was daytime. The first boy said, "No, Pa! You're WRONG! We live in the age of cycles, and the inner man tells me its dinnertime!"

Man is just finding out that he is living in a complex of cyclical change which was formerly beyond his wildest imaginings. Individuals have daily cycles, weekly or two-weekly, three-weekly or monthly cycles governing their activities. There is also a pronounced annual cycle of activity for every individual, modified by nutrition and health and emotional cycles. Not to mention the longer sun-spot cycles.

Animals have reproductive cycles, so that one year may see a regular plague of predatory wildcats or fur-bearing animals and two years later the numbers of the same species may drop off alarmingly. Many animals appear to wax and wane in numbers with factors such as the degree of sun-spot activity, with amount of atmospheric ozone present, with amount of rainfall, etc., etc. At any rate every wild creature studied by cyclists (not a pun) has its definite population cycles, its mating cycles, its activity cycles.

A noted astronomer remarked in the early nineteen-forties that the stars appear to influence the cyclical changes in the sun, and that there are probably vast concomitant effects of all the heavenly bodies upon each other.

How devastatingly strange that animals are victimized by the total cyclical changes, and by individual cyclical changes, in the environment, and that man should *not* be influenced at all by the closest of the heavenly bodies.

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How to Avoid Saving Money

by DANNY KAYE



To avoid saving money, the first thing is to cut off all your pockets. Thus you will have to carry your money in your hand. Which will insure that you—1. spend it, 2. lose it, 3. get it taken from you—quicker!



Also avoid piggy banks. The kiddies in particular are victimized by such devices, often saving quite a bale of moolah. And be sure to avoid budgets or, before you know it, you'll be in the black! It is best to draw your pay and walk down Main Street buying anything you don't particularly hate.

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Danny Kaye

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